DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

A Mongrel Tradition

Contemporary Scottish Crime Fiction and its Transatlantic Contexts

Kydd, Christopher

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For Evie

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Candidate's Declaration

I declare that I am the author of the thesis; that, unless otherwise stated, all references cited have been consulted by me; that the work of which this thesis is a record has been done by me, and that it has not been previously accepted for a higher degree.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Supervisor's Statement

This is to certify that Christopher Kydd has carried out research under my supervision and that he has fulfilled the conditions of the relevant Ordinance of Regulations for the completion of a PhD degree.

Doctor Aliki Varvogli

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Summary

This thesis discusses contemporary Scottish crime fiction in light of its transatlantic contexts. It argues that, despite participating in a globalized popular genre, examples of Scottish crime fiction nevertheless meaningfully intervene in notions of Scottishness. The first chapter examines Scottish appropriations of the hard-boiled mode in the work of William McIlvanney, Ian Rankin, and Irvine Welsh, using their representation of traditional masculinity as an index for wider concerns about community, class, and violence. The second chapter examines examples of Scottish crime fiction that exploit the baroque aesthetics of gothic and noir fiction as a means of dealing with the same socio-political contexts. It argues that the work of Iain Banks and Louise Welsh draws upon a tradition of distinctively Scottish gothic in order to articulate concerns about the re-incursion of barbarism within contemporary civilized societies. The third chapter examines the parodic, carnivalesque aspects of contemporary Scottish crime fiction in the work of Christopher Brookmyre and Allan Guthrie. It argues that the structure of parody replicates the structure of genre, meaning that the parodic examples dramatize the textual processes at work in more central examples of Scottish crime fiction. The fourth chapter focuses on examples of Scottish crime fiction that participate in the culturally English golden-age and soft-boiled traditions. Unpacking the darker, more ambivalent aspects of these apparently cosy and genteel traditions, this final chapter argues that the novels of M. C. Beaton and Kate Atkinson obliquely refract the particularly Scottish concerns about modernity that the more central examples more openly express.

Introduction

> Scottishness is not some pedigree lineage. This is a mongrel tradition!
>
> - William McIlvanney.[1]

> There is no tradition of the crime novel in Scotland – no particularly Scottish equivalent to Agatha Christie or Raymond Chandler.
>
> - Ian Rankin.[2]

Concluding his 2009 introductory guide to Scottish literature, Gerard Carruthers argues that 'the most significant Scottish literature is, perhaps, to be most approvingly registered when it contributes to a wider, rather than just a "local" culture', and for this reason he proposes that 'a future direction for Scottish literary study should lie in the area of comparative literature'.[3] In the same conclusion, he apologetically admits that his study, for the sake of maintaining a cohesive discussion, excludes 'the best-selling mode of Scottish literature: crime fiction' (*SL*, 198). Contemporary Scottish crime fiction is indeed an important omission from his otherwise impressively far-reaching survey, not only because it is 'the most popular form of Scottish literature' (*SL*, 198), but also because, in line with his conception of 'the most significant Scottish literature', it is a rich, recognizably Scottish contribution to a wider international culture and it constitutes a particularly revealing body of fiction for comparative analysis.

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[1] William McIlvanney, [Speech given on a demonstration in the Meadows, Edinburgh, in 1992] as quoted in Neal Ascherson, *Stone Voices: The Search for Scotland* (London: Granta Books 2003), p. 75.

[2] Ian Rankin, 'Foreword', in Len Wanner, *The Crime Interviews: Volume Two* (Glasgow: Blasted Heath, 2012), Kindle edition.

[3] Gerard Carruthers, *Scottish Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), pp. 198-199. Subsequent references to this text will use this edition with the page numbers indicated in parenthesis in the main body of the thesis.

This thesis takes up the two-sided gauntlet thrown down in Carruthers's conclusion and examines contemporary Scottish crime fiction in just these terms. In particular, it gauges the role that Scottishness plays in Scottish crime texts since the late 1970s, situating this Scottishness and the texts within their wider transatlantic contexts. At a superficial level, of course, it would seem tautological to interrogate the Scottishness of texts that are largely written by Scottish authors, set in Scotland, and about Scottish characters. These factors, however, offer little insight into Scottishness and do little to illuminate the texts themselves. For Scottishness to be a meaningful condition of the texts in question, it is necessary to address a number of issues more specific to contemporary Scottish crime fiction that complicate the suitability of this national categorization. These issues are to do with the complex ways that nations and genres operate in an increasingly globalized world. Indeed, popular crime fiction has now spread across every national boundary and, significantly, it most often appears in standardized forms that constitute cultural offshoots of the American hard-boiled tradition. Although currently less in vogue, the genre's other key tradition, the English golden-age murder mystery, also retains a considerable purchase on contemporary crime fiction. This global proliferation of a popular genre in which, according to Ian Rankin, Scotland has no tradition of its own means that the Scottishness found in recent Scottish crime fiction would have to be demonstrably distinctive for it to have any significant bearing on the way the texts are understood. Of course, Rankin's claim that Scotland lacks a tradition of crime fiction is one which requires qualification. There are plenty of examples of nineteenth-century and twentieth-century Scottish fiction, discussed shortly in this

introduction, which can certainly be categorized as crime fiction. His claim is more justifiable when he adds that there is 'no particularly Scottish equivalent to Agatha Christie or Raymond Chandler', since Scotland cannot lay claim to a cohesive, instantly recognizable mass-market tradition akin to the English golden age or the American hard-boiled mode.

As Berthold Schoene points out, concerns about national authenticity and distinctiveness have dogged Scottish literary criticism throughout the twentieth century, with two of the three most persistent critical questions being 'how truly and unmistakably "Scottish" Scottish literature really is' and 'if Scotland's literature is indeed marked by an essential difference, then what exactly might be the most salient attributes of this essence'.[4] Contemporary Scottish crime fiction provides a rather atypical case study for these concerns because the texts conspicuously participate in what is ostensibly an internationally-standardized mass-market genre. Applying these supposedly hoary questions of national authenticity or distinctiveness to a field in which the Scottishness would intuitively seem to be inauthentic or indistinguishable gives this line of enquiry a renewed relevance. The nature of the primary material alone precludes any naive insistence on some kind of ethnic or national purity of the texts. Corresponding instead with William McIlvanney's momentous description of Scottishness as 'a mongrel tradition', contemporary Scottish crime fiction is a domain in which Scottish traditions interact meaningfully with non-Scottish traditions. With certain examples, moreover, the question of Scottishness becomes more about unpacking the often nuanced roles that

[4] Berthold Schoene, 'Going Cosmopolitan: Reconstituting "Scottishness" in Post-devolution Criticism', in *The Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Literature*, ed. by Berthold Schoene (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), pp. 7-16 (p. 9).

local contexts play in even the most seemingly globalized cultural products. It is the business of this thesis, then, to analyse the specific ways that Scottish crime fiction appropriates and adapts the familiar Anglo-American traditions. It ultimately argues that although recent Scottish crime fiction deploys the conventions of these non-indigenous practices, certain examples do so in ways that are particularly resonant with Scottish society and culture at this time. These texts thereby demonstrate much in common, socially and aesthetically, with contemporary Scottish fiction outside the crime genre. This substantial overlap may merely situate current Scottish fiction, both crime and non-crime, within various broader traditions such as urban fiction or proletarian writing, but examples of contemporary Scottish crime fiction are nevertheless involved in negotiating imaginative conceptions of Scottishness.

In terms of the primary material, this project's historical remit is the late 1970s to the present. This time-frame is important in terms of both the development of the crime genre and Scotland's changing circumstances. The wider generic and national significance of the time period will be discussed more extensively later in this introduction. This thesis takes the late 1970s as its starting-point, however, mainly because this chronological perimeter reflects the bulk of the most relevant primary material. There is undeniably Scottish crime fiction before the 1970s. The title of Susie Maguire and Amanda Hargreave's anthology of Scottish crime fiction *Something Wicked* (1999) even retrospectively attempts to assimilate William Shakespeare's *Macbeth* (c. 1603) into the tradition, despite being written by an English author.[5] Perhaps the earliest texts that are directly relevant to this thesis are

[5] Susie Maguire and Amanda Hargreaves (eds.), *Something Wicked: New Scottish Crime Fiction* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1999).

the several examples of Victorian Scottish crime writing, all of which exist in a liminal area between true crime and detective narrative, such as the various case-books of real-life Edinburgh police investigator James McLevy published throughout the 1860s, William Crawford Honeyman's hoax 'real-life' case-books of Edinburgh detective James McGovan such as *Brought to Bay; or, Experiences of a City Detective* (1878), and J. E. Preston Muddock's celebrated Glasgow-based Dick Donovan detective stories (1889-1922). Aside from this brief spell of Victorian crime writing, however, Scottish crime texts before the 1970s tend to be stylistically disparate and historically sporadic, and they cannot be comfortably grouped with the core of contemporary Scottish crime fiction.

There are, however, several noteworthy examples predating this thesis's remit that are contextually relevant to the project. Alexander McArthur and H. Kingsley Long's novel *No Mean City* (1935), for instance, is an important precursor to the recent Scottish hard-boiled crime fiction discussed in this thesis's first chapter. It is a sensationalist account of Gorbals life in the 1920s, revolving around the slums' notorious razor-gangs and economic deprivation, co-written by an unemployed worker from the area and a London journalist. Like the American fiction of the same period by writers such as Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961), Dashiell Hammett (1894-1961), and James M. Cain (1892-1977), McArthur and Long's novel depicts the profound ambivalences of hard-boiled masculinity. Focussing on the rise and fall of one young gang leader named Johnnie Stark, known as the 'Razor King', the tragic narrative arc closely replicates the trajectory of American gangster fiction, as seen in the classic Hollywood gangster pictures

William A. Wellman's *The Public Enemy* (1931), Mervyn LeRoy's *Little Caesar* (1931), and Howard Hawks's *Scarface* (1932). Echoing the American figure of the gangster, Johnnie Stark is a spirited character fighting to survive in an unequal society but his ruthless ambition and violent methods mean that he mirrors and perpetuates the legally-sanctioned injustices of the very society from which he has supposedly liberated himself. This kind of ambivalence is a key theme in the Scottish crime texts discussed in the first chapter of this thesis, where it will be argued that such equivocal constructions of hard-boiled masculinity resonate with markedly Scottish concerns about capitalism and individualism during the years of Margaret Thatcher's government (1979-1990). Negotiating the boundary between between sincerely documenting and harmfully sensationalizing the problems of working-class Scottish life is likewise applicable to more contemporary examples.

In many ways, then, *No Mean City* represents a kind of false start for the Scottish appropriations of the American hard-boiled tradition that have dominated Scottish crime fiction since the late 1970s. The novel's lurid and self-consciously gritty images of working-class Glasgow have cast a long shadow in representations of urban Scotland throughout the twentieth century, and it is these images that many recent Scottish crime texts repeat or negotiate. Indeed, the novel's title is recycled in Maggie Bell's huskily-sung theme song for Glenn Chandler's television crime series *Taggart* (1983-present), notably the longest-running and most successful Scottish television series of all time, the main chorus being 'This is no mean town, this is no mean city'.[6] Although *No Mean City* offers a seminally brutal depiction of working-

[6] *Taggart*, created by Glenn Chandler, directed by various (STV, 1983-present). For information about the series' success, see Duncan Petrie, *Contemporary Scottish Fictions: Cinema, Television and*

class Glasgow, which is clearly relevant to contemporary Scottish crime fiction, there is too much of an historical gulf for it to be sensibly contextualized in the same way. It is more precise to read the novel within the strong traditions of Scottish proletarian fiction of the 1930s, which provide a context for the texts discussed in the first chapter of this thesis. Since this project revolves around interactions between Scottish and non-Scottish traditions, there are also several key Scottish texts outside the crime genre that are contextually relevant. Such texts include James Hogg's *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824) and Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886), both chiefly considered in this thesis's second chapter, and Muriel Spark's *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1961), which inform the reading of Scottish golden-age texts in this thesis's final chapter.

This core primary material with which this project is concerned, however, does not commence until the late 1970s. To be more specific, this thesis argues that 1977 marks a kind of Year Zero for Scottish crime fiction, being the year that saw the publication of William McIlvanney's first crime novel *Laidlaw* (1977) and the debut of Tom McGrath and Jimmy Boyle's play *The Hard Man* (1977). These two texts stand in stark contrast to the Scottish crime fiction that immediately precedes them. One revealing example of pre-1977 Scottish crime fiction, for instance, is Bill Knox's long-running but now largely forgotten Thane and Moss police procedurals (1957-1999) which, though largely competent and well-researched, are not significant or original contributions to either Scottish fiction or the wider crime

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the Novel (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), p. 143. Subsequent references to this text will use this edition with the page numbers indicated in parenthesis in the main body of the thesis.

genre. Knox's *Little Drops of Blood* (1962), for instance, is quite a mechanical example of crime fiction, soberly adhering to the conventions of the police procedural, featuring by-the-book investigators and focussing on the unfolding of the puzzle, rather than providing any meaningful analysis of crime and its social contexts. Although it is set in Glasgow, moreover, there is very little in the novel that is specific to Scotland, aside from one absurd scene set in a version of Aviemore super-saturated with local colour:

> 'We call it the Grey Man of the Cairngorms,' said Donny. 'Och, the experts will tell you it iss chust your own reflection thrown back by the mist and the sun – like they say there's no monster in Loch Ness [...] I am chust a dam' stupid Highland polisman whose grandmother told him too fey tales – too many by far, whateffer.' He began to stride off, the others stumbling to follow before he disappeared into the mist.[7]

In short, prior to the 1970s, Scottish crime fiction was largely content to repeat the conventions of the genre and go along with existing representations of Scotland.

Laidlaw and *The Hard Man*, on the other hand, are both highly self-reflexive works that, in very different ways, negotiate the implied values and assumptions of the hard-boiled mode and Scottish fiction to offer penetrating commentary on crime, masculinity, and social class in an appreciably Scottish context. These two texts are the subject of more sustained analysis in this thesis's first chapter. Many of the recurring concerns and motifs of Scottish crime fiction, established by *Laidlaw* and *The Hard Man*, are crystallized in the 1980s in a variety of important texts: the continuing work of McIlvanney; the first appearance of *Taggart* in 1983; Peter Turnbull's workmanlike Glasgow police procedurals (1981-1998); Frederic

[7] Bill Knox, *Little Drops of Blood* [1962] (London: Constable, 2000), p. 203.

Lindsay's dystopian political thriller *Brond* (1984); the early gothic novels of Iain Banks including *The Wasp Factory* (1985); the debut of Ian Rankin's Rebus series with *Knots & Crosses* (1987); the start of Val McDermid's career (1987-present); and Frank Kuppner's 'novel, of sorts' *A Very Quiet Street* (1989), a semi-autobiographical meditation on the nature of evidence and criminal investigation concerning the Oscar Slater trial of 1909.[8] A surprising counter-tradition of more whimsical or soft-boiled Scottish crime fiction also emerges in the 1980s in the shape of various films and novels: wry crime capers such as Bill Forsyth's *That Sinking Feeling* (1980) and Michael Hoffman's *Restless Natives* (1985); Forsyth's idiosyncratic comic version of the Glasgow ice cream wars *Comfort and Joy* (1984); the launch of Alanna Knight's classical-style Inspector Faro mysteries which are set in 1870s Edinburgh (1988-present); and, perhaps most significantly, the start of M. C. Beaton's hyper-cosy Hamish Macbeth series (1985-present).

There was such a massive upsurge in Scottish crime fiction throughout the 1990s and 2000s that there are too many texts and variants to mention here. Naturally, many of the aforementioned crime series that started in the 1980s continued to develop throughout these later decades. Novels by heavyweights Rankin and McDermid, in particular, drew much attention to Scottish crime fiction throughout this time, both domestically and internationally. It is perhaps these two writers' stable popularity that has paved the way for the sheer diversity of Scottish crime fiction during the 1990s and 2000s. Hard-boiled concerns about Scottish working-class machismo continue to be relevant in crime texts like Irvine Welsh's novels *Filth* (1998) and *Crime* (2008), Anthony Neilson's film *The Debt Collector*

[8] Frank Kuppner, *A Very Quiet Street: a novel, of sorts* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1989).

(1999), and the popular television adaptations of Rankin's Rebus series (2000-2008). The innovative novels of Denise Mina and Karen Campbell provide further examples of serious crime fiction of a similar mould, incisively analysing Scottish society but avoiding the sometimes limiting masculine emphases of the nation's recent hard-boiled tradition. Mina's *The Field of Blood* (2005) and Campbell's *The Twilight Time* (2008), for example, are compelling variants on this kind of urban crime novel in terms of their representation of female characters working in the traditionally masculine industries of journalism and the police force.

The soft-boiled tradition is carried on throughout this time by the continuing Hamish Macbeth series and the work of Alexander McCall Smith, especially his *No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency* novels (1999-present) and his *Sunday Philosophy Club* series (2004-present), while Kate Atkinson's Jackson Brodie series (2004-2010) provides a more self-consciously literary variant of the golden-age mystery. A strong gothic dimension also surfaces in many Scottish crime texts in the last two decades: Iain Banks's novel *Complicity* (1993) and Gavin Millar's adaptation of it (2000); David Hayman's neo-noir *The Near Room* (1995); Danny Boyle's gothic thriller *Shallow Grave* (1994); Paul Johnston's dystopian crime series set in 2020s Edinburgh (1997-2001); the exceptional work of Louise Welsh, perhaps best illustrated by her novel *The Cutting Room* (2002); and Justin Molotnikov's highly original noir *Crying with Laughter* (2009). A further tradition of self-consciously lurid, parodic, and stylized crime fiction also emerges at this time in the work of Christopher Brookmyre (1996-present), Douglas Lindsay's comedy crime series about socially-awkward, mass-murdering Glasgow barber Barney Thomson (1999-

present), and the ultra-violent American-style pastiches of Allan Guthrie (2004-present).

The body of primary material outlined above is worthy of sustained critical investigation for several reasons. The texts in question exercise a widespread popular appeal and, whether intentionally or not, they are highly politicized, a combination that makes them of especial social relevance. Contemporary Scottish crime fiction is made further relevant because, as 'the best-selling mode of Scottish literature', it plays an important role in generating and intervening in Scotland's sense of itself. In this regard, it echoes Scotland's most popular genre from a century before, the Kailyard fiction of the 1880s and 1890s, which has exercised a profound and enduring influence on representations of Scotland. Because contemporary Scottish crime fiction simultaneously contributes to both wider international and Scottish traditions, it also provides a valuable sounding-board for interrogating various meaningful issues such as what it means for a text to be culturally Scottish, the complexities of popular genre fiction's engagement with place and national identity, and the deeply equivocal processes of globalization.

Despite its social relevance, popularity, and wider critical implications, contemporary Scottish crime fiction has received scant academic attention so far. There are, for instance, no scholarly monographs devoted to contemporary Scottish crime fiction as a whole. Secondary material on the subject comprises an extensive range of journal articles, usually covering an individual author or text, a number of short introductory guides to individual novels, and a couple of chapters on aspects of Scottish crime fiction within wider studies or collections. Of particular relevance is

the work of Gill Plain, whose publications include *Ian Rankin's 'Black and Blue': A Reader's Guide* (2002), 'Hard Nuts to Crack: Devolving Masculinities in Contemporary Scottish Fiction' (2003), 'Concepts of Corruption: Crime Fiction and the Scottish "State"' (2007), and the introduction to one 2008 special edition of the crime fiction journal, *Clues: A Journal of Detection* (1980-present), which was dedicated to Scottish crime fiction. As will become evident, Plain's various pieces provide essential foundations for this thesis, dealing with a number of its key critical issues such as gender, social class, the national categorization of crime fiction, the genre's social implications, and Scotland's changing circumstances during the period. This thesis's first chapter in particular builds on Plain's work, benefitting especially from her analysis of masculinity and society as exemplified in Rankin's Rebus novels. The extra scope allowed by a project of this length means that these themes can be broadened out and applied to other examples of recent Scottish crime fiction. Although Plain has not specifically dealt with Scotland's contributions to gothic, parodic, and golden-age crime fiction, this project's later chapters are also obliquely informed by her analysis of the more hard-boiled and overtly politicized examples. This thesis is also more generally indebted to Plain's monograph *Twentieth-Century Crime Fiction: Gender, Sexuality and the Body* (2001), which, although it does not engage with Scottish crime fiction directly, helpfully exfoliates the critical orthodoxies about the English and American crime traditions that are important to this study, opening up fresh interpretative possibilities for these modes.

Duncan Petrie's *Contemporary Scottish Fictions: Film, Television and the Novel* (2004) offers further essential ground-work for this thesis in its thoroughgoing

inter-medial discussion of the remarkable developments in Scottish fiction since the 1980s and their wider socio-political contexts. Petrie's book contains an impressive chapter on Scottish crime fiction that concentrates on Scotland's working-class masculine tradition in the genre, focusing on the Rebus novels and *Taggart*. It thus corresponds well with this thesis's first chapter but it uses different examples and has different emphases. Other than Plain's guide to Rankin's *Black and Blue* (1997), there are various short introductory guides to individual novels, including Cairns Craig's *Iain Banks's 'Complicity': A Reader's Guide* (2002), Beth Dickson's *Scotnotes: William McIlvanney's 'Laidlaw'* (1998), and Christopher Nicol's *Scotnotes: Ian Rankin's 'Black and Blue'* (2008). As well as a whole host of reviews and interviews too numerous to mention here, there are a few non-scholarly secondary sources that have informed this thesis, such as Rankin's semi-autobiographical discussion of his own work *Rebus's Scotland: A Personal Journey* (2006), Craig Cabal's *Ian Rankin and Inspector Rebus* (2010), and Len Wanner's collection of interviews *Dead Sharp: Scottish Crime Writers on Country and Craft* (2011). There is, of course, much relevant secondary material that deals with this project's wider research contexts of crime fiction, Scottish literature, and globalization, and this material will be discussed in more detail throughout the main chapters.

What makes this thesis an original piece of research is not only its analysis of relatively untapped primary material but also its transnational approach. Steven Vertovec provides a lucid definition of this fiercely contested geographical term:

> 'Transnationalism' broadly refers to multiple ties and interactions linking people or institutions across the borders of nation-states. Today myriad systems of relationship, exchange and mobility function intensively and in real time while being spread across the world. New technologies, especially involving telecommunications serve to connect such networks. Despite great distances and notwithstanding the presence of international borders (and all the laws, regulations and national narratives they represent), many forms of association have been globally intensified and now take place paradoxically in a planet-spanning yet common arena of activity.[9]

Vertovec emphasizes the positive possibilities of international integration, pointing to the ways that distant people and communities are brought together by the increasingly sophisticated networks of communication and exchange that exist between nations. As he implies when he describes such networks as 'being spread across the world', however, one possible consequence of this heightened global communication is the levelling-out of national and cultural differences. What is most interesting in Vertovec's account is his recognition of the resistance posed to this process by national boundaries, the different regulatory systems they represent, and, perhaps most significantly, the narratives to which individual nations steadfastly cling as markers of identity. Working in American studies, Paul Giles draws attention to the central role that such national narratives continue to play within the two-way dynamic of transnational discourse:

> To reconsider American literature and culture in a transnational context, then, is not to abandon the idea of nationalism, but to reimagine it as a virtual construction, a residual narrative rather than a unifying social power. In this aestheticized form, nationalism, like Christianity at the end of the nineteenth century, functions more as a signifier than a signified, a discourse whose emotive valence retains a capacity to shape the direction of material objects and events even though its theoretical coherence has been emptied out. To

[9] Steven Vertovec, as quoted in *Transnational Spaces*, ed. by Peter Jackson, Philip Crang, and Claire Dwyer (London: Routledge, 2004), p. iii.

> talk of American studies in postnational terms may be premature, for the nation has not yet ceased to be meaningful as a category of affiliation and analysis.[10]

While it is intuitive that rapid global integration would render the imagined communities of nations increasingly irrelevant by re-contextualizing their inhabitants and organizations within planet-spanning networks of communication and association, as opposed to discrete local communities, the nation remains a powerful agency in narrative terms. This dimension, in some cases, is even strengthened by the challenge that transnationalism poses to it. A transnational approach to an individual nation's involvement in a globally ubiquitous, popular genre is useful because, as Giles suggests, the discourse allows for the co-existence of multiple modes of affiliation: local, national, and international. Transnationalism, moreover, takes into account the ways that the virtual constructions and residual narratives of nations remain culturally relevant in spite of, and in some cases because of, the global integration of those nations into the kind of networks that Vertovec describes above.

Globalization, defined neutrally by James Lull as the 'flow of people, images, commodities, money, ideas, and information on a global scale', is intensified by these networks, arguably driving towards a contemporary condition that Fredric Jameson describes as 'the worldwide Americanization or standardization of culture, the destruction of local differences, [and] the

[10] Paul Giles, *Virtual Americas: Transnational Fictions and the Transatlantic Imaginary* (London: Duke University Press, 2002), p. 20.

massification of all the peoples on the planet'.[11] Such concerns are especially important for this study. Understood in its most straightforward and superficial sense, genre fiction is emblematic of culture at its most commodified and formulaic, apparently lacking those qualities of originality, experimentation, and individuality associated with more self-consciously literary works. Even more so than most other genres, crime fiction is often understood in these terms. Helmut Heissenbüttel, a self-proclaimed consumer of the genre, argues that 'the narrative of the crime novel is fundamentally trapped in an abstractly functioning schematism with its own rigorous regularity […] It does not produce, but it does guarantee the infinite variability of the one story'.[12] This pessimistic description of the genre suggests that the potential for new crime texts will always exist but this potential is undermined by the fact that such texts are necessarily variations of what is, in essence, the same narrative.

This thesis argues, however, that the supposedly standardizing processes of globalization and apparently homogenizing pressures of popular genre fiction are both far more ambivalent than the conventional critical views allow. Indeed, Arjun Appadurai points out that global integration should not be crudely interpreted as a cultural steam-roller flattening out local differences, but a dynamic process that actually does much to emphasize and intensify local contexts:

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[11] James Lull, *Media, Communication, Culture: A Global Approach* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 2000), p. 285. Fredric Jameson, 'Globalization as a Philosophical Issue', in *The Cultures of Globalization*, ed. by Fredric Jameson and Masao Miyoshi (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1998), pp. 54-77 (p. 57).

[12] Helmut Heissenbüttel, 'Rules of the Game of the Crime Novel', in *The Poetics of Murder: Detective Fiction and Literary Theory*, ed. by Glenn W. Most and William W. Stowe (New York: Harcourt Jovanovich, 1983), pp. 79-92 (p. 85).

> Claims of creeping global homogenization invariably subspeciate into either an argument about Americanization, or an argument about commoditization, and very often these two arguments are very closely linked. What these arguments fail to consider is that at least as rapidly as forces from the various metropolises are brought into new societies, they tend to become indigenized in one way or another: this is true of music and housing styles as much as it is true of science and terrorism, spectacles and constitutions.[13]

This thesis embraces Appadurai's understanding of globalization. Scotland's participation in the culturally American tradition of hard-boiled crime fiction, for instance, need not be taken as an internalized form of cultural imperialism, whereby Scotland has mechanically adopted the cultural model of a more powerful nation famed for its mass entertainment and, through replicating this model, proliferated the values and assumptions inherent in the non-indigenous tradition. While this kind of wholesale repetition of the genre applies in some cases, certain Scottish crime texts appropriate the American model knowingly, giving it a variety of possible inflections, such as using it as a vehicle to articulate distinctively Scottish concerns, re-moulding it to suit local contexts and predispositions, or even subverting the model to undermine Americanist values and assumptions. Lull calls such instances examples of indigenization, in which 'imported cultural materials ranging from food to architecture and popular music are adapted to local cultural conditions', or transculturation, whereby 'a cultural form (e.g. language, food, music) moves from one physical location to another where it interacts with and influences the local form (languages, food, music, etc.) and produces new cultural hybrids'.[14] As the knowing appropriations of crime fiction cited above demonstrate, Appadurai's two-way

[13]Arjun Appadurai, 'Disjunction and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy', in *Global Culture: Nationalism, Globalization, and Modernity*, ed. by Mike Featherstone (London: Sage, 1990), pp. 295-310 (p. 295).
[14] Lull, *Media, Communication, Culture*, pp. 286, 292.

model of global integration is equally applicable to the apparently standardizing drives of genre fiction. Indeed, nation and genre are both meaningful categories of identification and analysis which have much in common with one another, and it is helpful to discuss the two in tandem.

Contemporary Scottish crime fiction, then, is an ever-expanding and heterogeneous body of work that exists within the intersection between a national literature and a popular genre: 'Scottish literature' and 'crime fiction'. These categorizations, and others like them, are frequently used by commercial booksellers, publishers, libraries, and universities to divide up literary texts for the purposes of their shop displays, catalogues, web-pages, marketing strategies, bookshelves, departments, courses, and conferences. These cultural institutions treat both Scottish literature and crime fiction as genres, though only the latter is widely referred to as such. They behave, in some sense, towards these categories as if they delineate cohesive, homogeneous groups of texts that have enough aspects of form and content in common that individual examples should invite similar expectations, generate similar meanings, and attract similar readerships who use the texts for similar purposes. Scottish literature and crime fiction are, however, both deeply problematic ways of categorizing texts. Indeed, these two categories are similarly amorphous in the sense that, however forcefully they may be believed in, and however convenient such classificatory schemas may be, 'Scottish literature' and 'crime fiction' rely more upon imagined conceptions of community and difference rather than an adherence to strictly defined criteria.

'Genres and nations,' as Rick Altman points out, 'are tied together in such a special way that, against all likelihood, genre theory might actually be a useful tool for analysing relationships between populations and the texts they use, for whatever purpose they might use them'.[15] Elaborating this idea, he sees genres as complex categories of identification characterized by 'vested interests in stability' and 'myths of distant origin, continued coherence and permanent violability', and, as such, he argues they are analogous to nations:

> Genres are not only formal arrangements of textual characteristics; they are also social devices that use semantics and syntax to assure simultaneous satisfaction on the part of multiple users with apparently contradictory purposes. That is, genres are regulatory schemes facilitating the integration of diverse factions into a single unified social fabric. As such, genres operate like nations and other complex communities. Perhaps genres can even teach us about nations.[16]

The reverse proposition is equally compelling. The debates of national and transnational discourses can be remarkably illuminating when they are applied to conceptions of genre. It is revealing to question why certain individuals and groups of people are central to constructions of a national identity, and, alternatively, why others are peripheral to their nation's myth-making. Interrogating why certain texts and types of text might be considered genre-defining, and why others represent more marginal or subversive examples, likewise foregrounds the assumptions that govern the way that the genre functions and the meanings that it creates. Within nations and genres, of course, that which is marginal can, and frequently does, eventually become central. Conceptions of both are always necessarily temporary, unstable, and

[15] Rick Altman, *Film/Genre* (London: BFI, 1999), p. 206.
[16] Altman, *Film/Genre*, p. 205, p. 195.

amenable to change. The national stereotypes and exaggerations of national traits that are used by outsiders to vilify or belittle a nation might helpfully be equated with the clichés and formulaic aspects of a genre that are put to a similar use by detractors of that genre. In Scottish crime fiction, such national stereotypes and generic clichés sometimes even coalesce, forming hybrids, for instance, between the hard-boiled hero and the Scottish hard man in the fiction of McIlvanney and Rankin, or blending elements of Kailyard fiction with the golden-age murder mystery in Beaton's Hamish Macbeth novels.

A nation's transnational relations are especially significant in this context. Conceptions of nations and constructions of national identity tend to be interdependent in the sense that they are frequently conceived in opposition to, or in allegiance with, those of other nations. The very idea of genre, too, relies entirely upon discerning differences and similarities between texts. Peter Clandfield's suggestion that 'Scottish identity is created or claimed, not necessarily given or inherited' is similarly applicable to generic identity.[17] Genres are not natural, they do have not clearly defined limits, and they are open to negotiation. In various interviews, for instance, Rankin recounts physically moving copies of his debut novel from the 'mystery' shelves to the 'Scottish literature' shelves in bookstores.[18] Publishers, authors, booksellers, critics, and readers all play a role in creating or claiming generic and sub-generic allegiances for texts, even though they often behave as if they are outside of the process. Negotiating generic identity often takes

[17] Peter Clandfield, 'Putting the "Black" into "Tartan Noir"', in *Race and Religion in the Postcolonial British Detective Story*, ed. by Julie H. Kim (London: McFarland & Company, 2005), pp. 211-238 (p. 231).
[18] J. Kingston Pierce, 'Ian Rankin: The Accidental Crime Writer', *January Magazine* (2000) <http://januarymagazine.com/profiles/ianrankin.html> [accessed 22 September 2012].

the form of debates about the cultural status of genre fiction, evident in instances where a crime novel is inanely reviewed as having 'transcended the genre' or condescendingly re-genrified as a 'literary thriller'. Indeed, there is a sense that certain artisanal crime texts are allowed to pass freely across the generic border into the sphere of so-called literary fiction, or even 'Scottish literature', while mass-market crime texts marked by mechanical stereotypes are denied entry into this prestigious realm. Such a literary immigration policy is buttressed by powerful ideological frameworks. Although the borders of genres and nations are to a large extent purely symbolic and imaginary, they do have a tangible material impact. Cairns Craig suggests that, in terms of nations, this impact exists in a feedback loop with the imaginative conceptions of the place and its population:

> Nations *imagine*: not in the sense that they fictionally construct themselves but in the sense that a group of people living in a particular place live with a set of circumstances which has inheritances, limitations, possibilities […] To act, in a national context, requires operating through (or, in opposition to) those institutions – from the ritualised structures of everyday life to the vast organisations of modern bureaucracy – which are the carriers of the nation's 'embodied argument'.[19]

The process of genrification, too, is backed up by material realities. It is perhaps even more of a commercial process than an aesthetic one. Indeed, genres are often created because publishers and producers deliberately encourage or engineer variations on a particular successful text in an attempt to replicate that text's commercial achievement.[20] To continue Altman's analogy between genre and nation

[19] Cairns Craig, *The Modern Scottish Novel: Narrative and the National Imagination* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), pp. 31-32.
[20] See Altman, *Film/Genre*, p. 38.

just one stage further, international migration and genre-mixing may also be seen as analogous, both being necessary processes that work to revitalize images of national identity or conceptions of the genre, rather than efface or diminish them.

As suggested earlier, the development of transnational networks of communication and exchange might flatten out cultural differences to an extent, but they simultaneously work to foreground local contexts and to foster processes like indigenization and transculturation. Imaginative constructs of nationhood and national identity therefore continue to play a significant and increasingly multifaceted role in how cultural products are promoted, consumed, and understood. Categorizing works of fiction along national lines is thus still a familiar habit, but it is one which leaves much open to question. It is unfeasible to isolate any single factor which conclusively determines the nationality of a literary text. Certain considerations seem unavoidable with regard to this question, however. These considerations might include the author's nationality, where the text was written, where the narrative is set, the nationality of the protagonist, the languages and dialects that the text uses, the text's engagement with national and regional concerns, and the use of particular formal or stylistic features which may align the text with other examples of literature from the same nation or region. It also seems reasonable to consider the extent to which a text engages convincingly or inventively with existing constructions of national identity or the nation's established aesthetic traditions. No contemporary texts can claim a national purity in all of these respects.

Using the author's nationality alone provides an inadequate basis since such an approach would preclude such instinctive and meaningful categorizations as that

of considering Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita* (1955) as an American novel, or Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1902) as a work of English literature. Offering an example more directly relevant to this thesis, Plain observes that 'it is difficult to define the Sherlock Holmes stories as examples of Scottish crime writing, for although there can be no doubt of the impeccable national credentials of their author, their London location cannot easily be read as Edinburgh transplanted'.[21] Reprising the argument that Scottish identity is something to be claimed or created, it is worth pointing out that there have been some attempts to read Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes series (1887-1927) as Scottish crime fiction. As will be discussed shortly, for instance, Val McDermid classifies them in this way by emphasizing the less normative aspects of the stories in order to align them with more central examples of Scottish crime fiction. As Plain's argument demonstrates, the issue of setting adds further complication to the national categorization of texts. Like the Sherlock Holmes stories, Stevenson's *Jekyll and Hyde* is set in London, its main characters are English, and it lays claim to a Scottish author. Unlike Conan Doyle and Holmes, however, both Stevenson and this novella are often fruitfully considered under the remit of Scottish literary studies. Indeed, Rankin goes so far as to describe Stevenson's text as 'that most Edinburgh of novels, yet infuriatingly set in London'.[22] *Jekyll and Hyde*'s version of London, as Rankin and many others see it, constitutes 'Edinburgh transplanted' for several reasons. Its setting is a geographically and socially divided urban landscape, which is arguably particularly evocative of Edinburgh, though Scotland's capital is by no means unique in this

[21] Gill Plain, 'Theme Issue: Scottish Crime Fiction', *Clues: A Journal of Detection*, 26.2 (2008), 5-9 (p. 5).
[22] Ian Rankin, *Rebus's Scotland: A Personal Journey* (London: Orion, 2006), p. 66.

regard. The novella's central premise evokes the Edinburgh criminal William 'Deacon' Brodie (1741-1788), a respectable cabinet-maker and city councillor who sustained his burgeoning addiction to gambling through persistent house-breaking. A topic to be discussed in more depth in this thesis's second chapter, Stevenson's text offers the definitive literary example of the split psyche paradigm, which critics often relate to the extremities of Scottish Calvinism. Perhaps most significantly, Stevenson's novella is thematically and structurally similar to Hogg's earlier novel *Justified Sinner*, which presents such extremities taken to their terrifying conclusion. This thesis argues that, although it is by no means peculiar to Scotland, the split psyche paradigm has received special, almost obsessive, formulation in Scottish culture. Many twentieth-century Scottish texts, including *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, Alasdair Gray's *Lanark* (1981), Emma Tennant's *The Two Women of London* (1989), and countless contemporary Scottish crime novels, consciously echo *Jekyll and Hyde*, perhaps adding retrospective weight to the reading of its setting as 'Edinburgh, transplanted'. There are some notable objections to this reading of *Jekyll and Hyde* such as the fact that, like many British cities at the time, Victorian London displays a similar geographical and social dichotomy to Edinburgh. Indeed, another narrative of duality, Oscar Wilde's London-set gothic novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890) provides an interesting point of comparison. Several critics such as Maureen O'Connor categorize it as an 'Irish national tale' for similar reasons as *Jekyll and Hyde* is read as a Scottish novel, yet both novels simultaneously contribute to imaginative representations of London at this time.[23] These objections

[23] Maureen O'Connor, '*The Picture of Dorian Gray* as Irish National Tale', in *Writing Irishness in Nineteenth-Century British Culture*, ed. by Neil McCaw (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited,

withstanding, the distinction between the Sherlock Holmes stories and *Jekyll and Hyde* seems to hinge upon the argument that Stevenson's text demonstrates an engagement with Scottish concerns and conspicuously exhibits similarities with other Scottish literature, both of which are rendered no less relevant by the novella's London setting and the nationality of its characters.

Using *Justified Sinner*, *Jekyll and Hyde*, and the Sherlock Holmes stories, McDermid attempts to posit a deep-rooted, distinctively Scottish tradition of crime fiction which, like the American hard-boiled mode, seems to be conceived, at least in part, in opposition to the traditional English detective narrative:

> It's clear from the differences between us and our English counterparts that our roots are in very different soils. For English crime writers, the Golden Age of Christie, Sayers and Allingham casts a long shadow. It's clearly discernable in the work of writers such as Reginald Hill, Ruth Rendell, P. D. James and Colin Dexter […] The line of descent for Scottish writers is quite different. The seed was sown with James Hogg's *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, a disturbing and compelling novel whose complex structure plays games with the reader, presenting us with one of the earliest examples of the unreliable narrative […] The next stepping stone is Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* […] Sherlock Holmes, brainchild of Arthur Conan Doyle, actually fits the template of Scottish crime fiction as neatly as any of us. Evocative settings, a deeply dysfunctional detective, a dark heart to his investigations and, of course, the knowledge that there were damn few like him.[24]

In proposing these specific texts as the roots of Scottish crime fiction, McDermid attempts to identify certain qualities which they share with contemporary examples of Scottish crime fiction, presenting these qualities as therefore somehow distinctively or authentically Scottish. Rankin's Rebus series forges these same

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2004), pp. 194-209.

[24] Val McDermid, 'This Year's Hot New Look: Tartan Noir', *The Times*, 6 August 2008, p. 3.

intertextual connections. *Hide & Seek* (1991) reworks *Jekyll and Hyde*, *The Black Book* (1993) consciously makes use of elements from *Justified Sinner*, and Rankin's protagonist works alongside characters named Brian Holmes and Superintendent Watson in the earlier novels: 'a none-too-subtle nod to another Edinburgh writer', as Rankin himself puts it.[25] Of course, neither *Justified Sinner* nor *Jekyll and Hyde* are conventionally categorized as examples of crime fiction. Rather, they are typically considered gothic fiction, though this form can be regarded as something of a generic ancestor to crime fiction. By drawing attention to these gothic texts, along with the Sherlock Holmes stories, however, McDermid seems to be constructing Scottish crime fiction as inherently dark, serious, unsettling, and morally complex. This suggestion is further enforced by her use of traditional, cosy English detective fiction as a foil for Scotland's contribution to the genre. Very different national implications would be suggested by juxtaposing classic English gothic fiction such as the novels of Horace Walpole and Ann Radcliffe against examples of more traditional detective fiction from Scotland such as McLevy's case-books and Muddock's Dick Donovan series. It is interesting too that she stakes a claim for the Sherlock Holmes stories as pieces of Scottish crime fiction on the basis of their more transgressive qualities, since Holmes is regarded as the quintessential English consulting detective, and Conan Doyle's stories are surely the most obvious examples of the classic, analytical detective narrative. That said, McDermid is right that both the character and the stories also strongly resist categorization as conventional English golden-age detective fiction. Although he may be an

[25] Ian Rankin, 'Introduction' (2005), in Ian Rankin, *Hide & Seek* (London: Orion, 1998), pp. xi-xiv (p. xii).

ingenious, upper-class investigator, Sherlock Holmes is a drug addict, presumably suffers from some form of bi-polar disorder, remains emotionally detached from his cases, and is something of a social misfit. The settings are resolutely gothic and frequently urban. The stories are occasionally far more open-ended than traditional detective fiction, too, sometimes unravelling to reveal that no crime has actually taken place, or concluding with the criminals un-apprehended and un-punished by the forces of law and order.

In calling attention to Scottish crime fiction's darker and more subversive characteristics, as well as its binary opposition to England's perceived contribution to the genre, then, McDermid hints towards the strong parallels that exist between Scotland's use of the genre and the American hard-boiled tradition. Indeed, she briefly alludes to the influence of 'American writers [who] had torn up the rule book and started writing vivid novels bursting with vitality and completely lacking in any respect for the establishment or the status quo'.[26] By so keenly calling attention to the nineteenth-century precursors of Scottish crime fiction, however, McDermid's analysis risks playing down the influence of the American traditions, which clearly provide a more immediate context for contemporary Scottish crime fiction than *Justified Sinner*, *Jekyll and Hyde*, and Sherlock Holmes. Indeed, responding to a question about the preponderance of dark Scottish crime fiction in recent decades, posed to him by Anne Garrec, Alasdair Gray immediately fingers the American influence, urging against over-determining the Scottishness of this body of work:

[26] McDermid, 'This Year's Hot New Look: Tartan Noir', p. 3.

> [Anne Garrec:] *How do you account for the Scottish popular culture's dark side - criminal whodunits – Ian Rankin, Taggart – Irvine Welsh – bleak realism and descriptions of violent, sick and sadistic actions, with or without grim paraphernalia and sadistic humour?*
>
> [Alasdair Gray:] I think this has happened because Scotland is now producing and exporting the sort of popular writing and filming that the USA has produced since the nineteen-thirties. But does any European nation lack such a popular dark side? […]You are seeking big simple generalizations to explain what Scottish fictions have in common with each other that make them differ from English, Irish, or USA fictions. But be careful not to over-simplify. Don't take John Knox too seriously.[27]

As Gray points out, it is vital not to underestimate the role played by the global Americanization of popular culture in decisively shaping Scotland's contribution to the crime genre. What he neglects, however, is the fact that Scotland's uses of the American traditions can never simply be blank, unmediated repetitions of the source material, since they are involved in a different set of contexts, which inevitably contribute to their meanings and effects. These contexts must be sensitively unpacked if questions of nationality are to inform analysis.

Indeed, since a text's nationality is not dependent on its setting, the nationality of its author, or the nationality of its characters, less readily quantifiable factors must be brought into play. In negotiating the national credentials of a text, then, it is necessary to consider its social, thematic, and stylistic characteristics alongside those of other texts from the same nation. This kind of negotiation is especially pertinent to crime fiction since the genre is routinely sub-divided into two traditions in which the aesthetic aspects are inseparably associated with the national, the English golden-age murder and the American hard-boiled mode. The two

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[27] Alasdair Gray, 'Alasdair Gray's Answers to Several Questionnaires: Questionnaire 7', *Alasdair Gray* (2000) <http://www.alasdairgray.co.uk/q_07.htm> [accessed 10 November 2008]

traditions and this kind of dual categorization, which problematically conflates style and nation, will be discussed in more detail later in this introduction. As well as this kind of nebulous cultural linkage between nation and genre, there are several practical reasons that different nations produce different types of crime fiction. Certain types of crime are more prevalent, for example, in particular countries and areas. Of course, what even constitutes crime in a strict legal sense can also differ drastically across national boundaries. The ways that nations investigate crime and punish their criminals, too, are radically varied. These factors are especially relevant with police procedurals and legal thrillers. As Plain astutely points out, 'once a crime narrative is located within the procedural confines of a system of law and order, it must inevitably absorb and reflect a specifically national dimension'.[28] To extend this point, such nationally-specific systems of governance mean that the underlying social, economic, and political causes of crime are also particular to different countries. With these material issues in mind, it seems very natural that different nations should produce different types of crime fiction.

Like the problems of attempting to demarcate the boundaries of Scottish writing, there are no clear, universally accepted criteria with which to determine what makes a text a piece of crime fiction. To take the uncertainty even further, what even counts as a crime, never mind what counts as a piece of crime fiction, can be exceedingly contentious and mutable. Alex Thomson's remarks on crime are particularly resonant in this context:

[28] Plain, 'Theme Issue: Scottish Crime Fiction', p. 6.

> Crime, then, will always have been a question of borders. After all, what else is a crime if not the crossing of some boundary or other […] How could there be crime without borders? The borders around that which I own, possessions or property, the crossing of which constitutes a theft; the moral boundaries across which society will not allow us to step without retribution; all those legal limits on where I may or may not go, what I may or may not do […] [B]orders are always artificial, never natural, and are imposed by the violence that consists in enforcing them. Might not the spectral problems of immigration which are haunting Europe today be one vast allegory (but still real problems) for the idea of crime itself?[29]

One possible objection to Thomson's argument is that certain types of killing, sexual assault, and theft are always going to be 'naturally', rather than 'artificially', regarded as crimes in modern societies. However, the specific legal definitions of these crimes differ from nation to nation, as will attitudes towards them and the punishments that they merit. The exact border between murder and manslaughter, for example, is not natural or given. Societies that punish certain crimes using the death penalty, moreover, operate with a different conception of the moral limit that has been transgressed from those that do not, but the artificiality of the boundary does not make the punishment any less real for the perpetrator. Several such artificial yet meaningful borders mark out the limits of this project. As argued earlier, Scotland's boundaries and the outer limits of what constitutes Scottish literature are undeniably borders of this kind.

As far as the crime genre is concerned, it seems too inclusive to suggest that the mere presence of crime or criminal activity of any kind transforms a piece of fiction into a piece of crime fiction since nearly every full-length novel would fulfil this criterion. Most of the key critics of crime fiction, such as Stephen Knight and Lee Horsley, avoid offering straightforward definitions of the genre, or identifying

[29] Alex Thomson, 'Editorial', *Edinburgh Review*, 102 (1999), 3-5 (p. 3).

the essential features or characteristics which separate works of crime fiction from non-crime texts. Instead, they emphasize the genre's diversity and mutability. Horsley's *Twentieth-Century Crime Fiction* (2005), for instance, advocates the need to avoid 'the deadening effects of "easy classification", taking more account of the fluidity of the genre and attempting to understand the many different ways in which generic revisions have been accomplished by rereadings and rewritings of what has gone before'.[30] This description presents crime fiction as always necessarily subject to re-definition thanks to the participation of new texts, putting paid to any notion that 'crime fiction' can be seen simply an entry in an imaginary, taxonomic filing cabinet. Knight's *Form and Ideology in Crime Fiction* (1980), moreover, concentrates on the 'differences of form between writers' which he insists are 'essential elements in the meaningful innovations which the story offers to its audience, intimately connected with the differences in content between texts such as the setting, the crimes discussed, the nature of the detective'.[31] It is not surprising, then, that most studies of crime fiction tend to be divided up into divergent sub-genres, which are often at odds with one another. Reinforcing the idea that generic identity is something to be claimed or created, Rankin argues that the multiplicity of sub-generic labels used in the marketing and analysis of crime fiction illustrates the elasticity of the genre:

> We can talk of the crime novel, the detective novel, the whodunit, the suspense novel, the cosy, the hard-boiled, the *roman noir*, pulp fiction, the police procedural, the mystery … And so on and so on. There's a reason for this. People are confused about the basic identity of the crime novel […] This

[30] Lee Horsley, *Twentieth-Century Crime Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 1.
[31] Stephen Knight, *Form and Ideology in Crime Fiction* (London: MacMillan Press Ltd., 1980), p. 5.

> is a genre that would seek to include everything from the most basic puzzle-style mystery to Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment*.[32]

As Rankin indicates, the question of what texts should be included in the genre is a loaded one. Debates often revolve around how experimental or high-brow a text is, or whether a text knowingly works within the patterns and conventions of the genre. Texts like Rankin's example of Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* (1866), which are about crime but which do not appreciably participate in the genre, provide interesting cases that reveal much about the perceived limits, values, and assumptions associated with the crime genre.

Like Knight and Horsley, John Scaggs acknowledges that it is reductive and unfeasible to offer a simple definition of crime fiction. He does however suggest that 'the centrality of crime' is the defining feature of crime fiction: 'a genre that, otherwise, in its sheer diversity, defies any simple classification […] a focus on crime, but only sometimes its investigation, has always been central to the genre'.[33]Considering the occurrence or frequency of crime within texts as a gauge in this regard does however draw attention to some of the central contradictions of the genre. Some texts which are conventionally and quite reasonably categorized as crime texts conclude without a crime actually being committed. A tale which is often taken to be the first detective story, for instance, Edgar Allan Poe's 'Murders of the Rue Morgue' (1841) unravels to reveal that the titular 'murders' are actually the result of an escaped orang-utan accidentally killing a woman with a razor blade whilst emulating his master's shaving actions before panicking and, completely

[32] Ian Rankin, 'Why Crime Fiction is Good for You', *Edinburgh Review*, 102 (1999), 9-16 (p. 10).
[33] John Scaggs, *Crime Fiction* (Oxon: Routledge, 2005), p. 1.

devoid of murderous intent, strangling the woman's daughter. None of these events can be strictly defined as a crime since an animal cannot technically commit a crime, at least not in nineteenth-century Paris. In McIlvanney's third Laidlaw novel *Strange Loyalties* (1991), Detective Inspector Jack Laidlaw is not primarily investigating a crime as such. Rather, in a narrative faintly reminiscent of Mike Hodges's *Get Carter* (1971), he has taken leave from his work to use his detective skills to conduct an amateur investigation into his brother's suicide. It nevertheless seems appropriate and productive to consider *Strange Loyalties* as a crime novel since it uses the same investigative structure and contains most of the essential ingredients of the form, albeit appropriating these generic conventions in order to investigate complex human relationships and motivations rather than to offer a formally-satisfying crime-detection-resolution structure.

Irvine Welsh's *Trainspotting* (1993), on the other hand, is a novel in which instances of crime and illegal activity take place with high frequency in nearly every chapter. It is instructive to compare Welsh's text with the several Sherlock Holmes stories, which, like 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue' feature no crime whatsoever, the narrative's apparent crime later revealed to be the result of an accident or a misunderstanding. However, while Poe's tale of ratiocination and all of the Sherlock Holmes stories are widely accepted as central examples of the crime genre, *Trainspotting* is not a crime novel in this same sense. Similarly, James Kelman's Booker Prize winning novel *How Late It Was, How Late* (1994), concerns an ex-convict and shoplifter named Sammy who falls victim to police brutality on an unparalleled scale. The novel thus seems to take crime as its central concern, yet

Kelman's work is, like *Trainspotting*, not a crime novel in the same sense as the fiction written by Rankin and McDermid. This distinction might be appropriate for a variety of reasons. One reason novels of this kind resist categorization as 'crime fiction' is that, despite featuring criminal activity in abundance or taking crime as their primary focus, they do not avail themselves of the conventions laid out by other earlier examples of crime fiction. The distinction is also to do with the questionable elitist boundary between 'genre fiction' and 'literary fiction'. Indeed, critically acclaimed novels such as Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose* (1980) or Martin Amis's *Night Train* (1997) knowingly borrow the conventions of the crime genre but, like the novels by Kelman and Welsh, are not typically regarded as examples of crime fiction, in the full sense of the term. This thesis argues that, whether they are considered examples of the crime genre or not, non-generic texts that revolve around crime and experimental texts that deploy the conventions of the form for high literary purposes, should be read alongside examples of generic crime fiction. In terms of this thesis, for instance, such cases act as a revealing intersection between Scotland's crime fiction and Scotland's non-crime fiction, facilitating an understanding of how international crime traditions are indigenized and transculturated. Indeed, as will be argued later in this introduction, it is highly significant that many of Scotland's literary and mainstream writers have written their own versions of the crime novel.

Although it is not analytically helpful to demarcate inflexible limits for crime fiction, the genre is indisputably marked by a number of conventions and patterns, which play an important role in governing the national division of crime texts. Since

there is little Scottish crime fiction before the late 1970s, the majority of Scottish crime fiction is necessarily participating in generic traditions that have originated and been developed outside Scotland. To reiterate Rankin's remarks which preface this introduction, 'There is no tradition of the crime novel in Scotland – no particularly Scottish equivalent to Agatha Christie or Raymond Chandler'. As his comment suggests, the standard critical narrative of twentieth-century crime fiction is that of two distinct traditions neatly conceived along national lines, both emerging during the interwar modernist era. There is the English golden-age tradition and there is the American hard-boiled tradition. The English golden age, in many ways the gentrified derivative of the classical Sherlock Holmes model, supposedly domesticates the more outré and politicized aspects of nineteenth-century crime fiction. It ostensibly presents a distinctively English, well-mannered version of the genre in which the violence is alchemized into a puzzle to be solved. The critical clichés of the sub-genre, which are of varying degrees of accuracy, include intricate plotting, genius detectives, bumbling coppers, upper-class eccentrics, idealized rural settings, sanitized descriptions of violence, and a conspicuous lack of engagement with the social causes of crime. The defining figure of English golden-age detective fiction is undoubtedly the widely dubbed 'Queen of Crime' Agatha Christie (1890-1976). Other writers closely associated with the sub-genre include Anthony Berkeley Cox (1893-1971), Margery Allingham (1904-1966), Dorothy L. Sayers (1893-1957), Josephine Tey (1896-1952), and Ngaio Marsh (1895-1982). Although the golden-age tradition is often regarded as historically contained between the wars, the essential features of the sub-genre remain a strong presence in much

contemporary crime fiction. This is not only true of cosies and clue-puzzles, but there are also soft-boiled variants of the police procedural, historical crime fiction, postmodern detective fiction, courtroom narratives, and others. As will be argued in the fourth chapter of this thesis, the golden-age tradition in general, and Christie's work in particular, is more complex and ambivalent than the popular and critical images of it would indicate.

Often understood as the binary opposite to the English golden-age murder mystery, the other tradition in twentieth-century crime fiction is the American hard-boiled mode. According to the standard critical accounts, the hard-boiled tradition emerges during the Great Depression and accentuates the politicized aspects of previous crime fiction. In this way, it is often understood in proximity to the rich tradition of American proletarian fiction of the same period. It is supposedly a masculine, realist mode, committed to exploring the social causes of crime and depicting violence unflinchingly, though, as the third chapter of this thesis will argue, it is actually highly stylized in its own way. The hard-boiled prose style, for instance, is celebrated for being pared-down and free from pretension, though this style should not be equated with objectivity. It is troublingly ideological, purportedly cutting through the decadence and apparently corrupting influences of a ruling liberal elite, communists, foreigners, and homosexuals. The iconic images of the hard-boiled mode include the trench-coated private eye who drinks hard and cracks wise, the femme fatale who uses her sexuality to exploit the male characters for nefarious purposes, and the image of the city as an 'asphalt jungle'.[34] Indeed, the setting is a barbarous urban milieu characterized by rampant corruption and

[34] *The Asphalt Jungle*, dir. by John Huston (MGM, 1950).

inequality, a hot-bed of murder, vice, deprivation, organized crime, and alcoholism. The sub-genre is often seen as an urbanized version of the western, another definitively American genre, with the frontier hero on the border between civilization and savagery becoming the vigilante private eye negotiating a liminal space between law enforcement and criminality. The hard-boiled tradition and its main cultural offshoot, film noir, are also frequently read as popular expressions of modernist anxiety, for reasons to be discussed at length in the first two chapters of this thesis. The hard-boiled tradition's equivalent of Agatha Christie is Raymond Chandler (1888-1959), though, as with Christie, the specificities of his fiction do not necessarily sit comfortably with the critical and popular myths of the sub-genre. The hard-boiled tradition is exemplified in the work of writers such as Dashiell Hammett (1894-1961), James M. Cain (1892-1977), Horace McCoy (1897-1955), and Mickey Spillane (1918-2006). Certain characteristics of the hard-boiled mode permeate the majority of twentieth-century and contemporary crime fiction. Its cultural offshoots include gangster fiction, film noir, literary noir, gritty police procedurals, criminal-centred crime narratives, and forensic thrillers.

The hard-boiled mode and the golden age, along with their concomitant transatlantic baggage, are traditionally understood in opposition to one another. In his influential essay 'The Simple Art of Murder' (1944), Chandler divides the two sub-genres along these national lines, disparaging 'the heavy crust of English gentility' which apparently saturates puzzle-story detective fiction in order to champion the new hard-boiled American style illustrated by Hammett's grittier and more dynamic style of crime fiction:

> Hammett took murder out of the Venetian vase and dropped it into the alley […] Hammett gave murder back to the kind of people that commit it for reasons, not just to provide a corpse; and with the means at hand, not hand-wrought dueling pistols, curare and tropical fish.[35]

Chandler exaggerates English detective fiction's gentility, eccentricity, superficial exoticism, and artificiality to provide a convenient series of binary oppositions to what Chandler presents as the more transgressive and sophisticated tropes of the American hard-boiled mode. 'The national dimension of this distinction,' as Plain accurately points out, 'did not even hold water at the time of Chandler's writing'.[36] Indeed, Chandler's schema is undermined by English examples such as Graham Greene's modernist crime thrillers *A Gun for Sale* (1936) and *Brighton Rock* (1938), and James Hadley Chase's violent and lurid hard-boiled crime novel *No Orchids for Miss Blandish* (1939), and American examples such as Mary Roberts Rinehart's melodramatic golden-age mysteries (1906-1953), and John Dickson Carr's witty clue-puzzle mysteries featuring Dr Gideon Fell (1933-1968). Chandler's imprecise division between English and American crime fiction, in effect, espouses a nationalist agenda, drawing upon an exaggeration of the perceived distinction between familiar constructions of English and American identity. The English are supposedly genteel, respectable, refined, eccentric, while Americans are rugged individualists: tough, bold, self-reliant, and disrespectful of authority. Chandler also posits the hard-boiled mode as a direct reaction against the fripperies of golden-age detective fiction. As J. A. Cuddon points out, however, 'the hard-boiled novelists

[35] Raymond Chandler, 'The Simple Art of Murder', in Raymond Chandler, *The Simple Art of Murder* (New York: Vintage, 1988), pp. 1-18 (p. 14).
[36] Plain, 'Theme Issue: Scottish Crime Fiction', p. 6.

have a stronger connection with, historically, the brutality of the ballads and the *Newgate Calendar*, and, proximally, the urban concerns of modernism, than with putting Agatha Christie in her place'.[37] It is notable that the intertextual connections that Cuddon draws upon here to contextualize the hard-boiled mode do not exhibit a particularly national emphasis. If they do, moreover, the bias is towards British influences rather than American.

Another, more significant problem with attempting to categorize the two traditions along national lines is that, although they are at odds with one another in many respects, some of the differences are relatively superficial when weighed up against the significant concerns that they have in common. Plain astutely problematizes the apparently irreconcilable gulf between the two traditions, proposing that the fundamental tensions that they depict actually correspond closely with one another:

> Philip Marlowe's glass is half-empty; he oozes weary cynicism and knows that things fall apart. Hercule Poirot's glass is half-full; he provides reassurance and believes that broken lives can be made whole again. These differences emerge from a considerable cultural divide: Christie and Chandler are separated by class, gender and the Atlantic Ocean. Their fictions are set in different worlds – the one close-knit and rural, the other disaffected and urban – and from these divisions spring countless further contrasts in attitude, assumptions and style. Nonetheless, although Marlowe's glass is half-empty, and Poirot's half-full, they are both drinking from the same glass, and that glass is crime fiction. Surface differences, no matter how substantial, should not obscure a fundamental shared concern with the disruption of order, the violence of shattered community and the search for some form of viable resolution that will set the world back within its familiar, if tarnished, parameters.[38]

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[37] J. A. Cuddon, *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* (London: Penguin, 1999), p. 194.
[38] Gill Plain, *Twentieth-Century Crime Fiction: Gender, Sexuality and the Body* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2001), p. 20.

As Plain's analysis demonstrates, the golden-age mystery and the hard-boiled crime novel, at a structural level, dramatize concerns about the erosion of community, about the passing of a traditional way of life, and about attempts to come to terms with this sense of rupture. There is an obvious potential, then, in both of crime fiction's main traditions for exploring the ambivalences of modernity. Indeed, as discussed more extensively throughout this thesis, both traditions have at times been read as populist versions of modernist anxiety.[39] The difference between the two traditions is to do with tone and degree. Where private eyes are openly cynical about all their fellow humans' integrity even after the crime has been solved, the golden-age investigator's suspicion seems to extend only to the remit of their investigation and it is usually tempered by charisma and gentility. Where hard-boiled crime fiction operates in a fallen world with a conspicuous absence of shared values, golden-age detective fiction expresses a kind of anticipatory nostalgia for the kind of traditional organic community that has not yet quite passed but inevitably will. As the fourth chapter of this thesis argues, however, there are significant fissures in the golden age's apparent reassurance and the sense of disruption plays an important role in the meanings of golden-age texts. A significant part of this thesis's argument, then, is that crime fiction's two traditions and their cultural offshoots respond to crises of modernity in their own idiosyncratic ways.

It is, at root, these traditions that recent Scottish crime fiction appropriates. One of the key ways that Scottish crime fiction indigenizes these now-

[39] See James Naremore, *More Than Night: Film Noir in its Contexts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), p. 38. See also Alison Light, *Forever England: Femininity, Literature and Conservatism Between the Wars* (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 62-64.

internationalized forms is through transposing and adapting them to respond to their own distinctive crises of modernity, so it is helpful to bring into play the historical contexts affecting Scotland since the late 1970s. Critical commentators agree that this period has been a distinctive one for Scotland, socially and culturally. Christopher Harvie's potted history of Scotland during the twentieth century underscores some of the key political issues involved:

> I have foregrounded the theme of Scotland's industrial stagnation and eventual decline: from being by any standards a substantial world industrial power in 1914 to its present status as a highly-specialised part of global capitalism, as uncertain and afraid as any cognate region as this particularly tormented century expires.[40]

The period since the late 1970s is the culmination of this process of de-industrialization and all its attendant effects, for reasons to be outlined shortly. There are various aspects of Harvie's analysis that have important implications for this thesis. Industrial decline, for instance, has a particular relevance for crime fiction, especially the hard-boiled tradition, which, as noted above, emerged during the Great Depression and is characterized by its presentation of working-class masculinity in crisis. Harvie's image of Scotland as a 'highly-specialised part of global capitalism' is also particularly resonant with the emphases of this project, since crime fiction is a commercially lucrative, mass product that has spread across the world. There is thus a temptation to see Scottish crime texts as globalized pulp fiction, at best commodified by superficial markers of Scottishness. This reading of the phenomenon, however, must be weighed against the notion that Scotland is a

[40] Christopher Harvie, *No Gods and Precious Few Heroes: Twentieth-Century Scotland* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), p. vii.

'highly-specialised' participant in this global practice, indicating that its cultural products might demonstrate at least some distinctively Scottish properties. In this regard, Scottish crime fiction is a useful object of study because, being a mostly dystopian body of fiction, it is able to articulate concerns about global capitalism, but it is also simultaneously a product of it. Harvie's description of Scotland as being 'uncertain and afraid' in the face of global capitalism has further resonances for Scottish crime fiction. The American hard-boiled and noir variants of the genre, for instance, have always been afflicted by, and expressive of, this kind of national self-consciousness and paranoia, exploring the dark side of American identity and the American Dream.

This thesis argues, moreover, that one enduring theme of Scottish fiction since the late 1970s has been that of coming to terms with the particular phase of modernity that marks the period. Lots of key Scottish texts from this time engage with the apparent disintegration of traditional, organic, face-to-face communities with shared values and assumptions, and these communities' assimilation into more complex, increasingly mediated, transnational social structures. This development is not peculiar to Scotland, of course. Indeed, in his book *The Vertigo of Late Modernity* (2007), Jock Young argues that contemporary society in general is characterized by three main conditions, all of which are related to increased global integration: 'the disembeddedness of everyday life, the awareness of a pluralism of values, and an individualism which presents the achievement of self-realisation as an ideal'.[41] One of the most distinctive aspects of contemporary Scottish fiction has been the particular inflections with which it negotiates these three conditions. Of

[41] Jock Young, *The Vertigo of Late Modernity* (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2007), p. 2.

course, many of the developments that have generated these conditions have been largely welcomed in Scotland such as the wider networks of communication and exchange, processes of migration and opportunities for travel, increased access to information, and advances in technology, as is evident from Scotland's own Silicon Glen. There is a significant trend in recent Scottish culture, however, for lamenting the breakdown of communitarian values and the flattening of local differences in the face of global capitalism and western individualism. This trend is observable, for instance, in the fiction of William McIlvanney (b. 1936), Alasdair Gray (b. 1934), James Kelman (b. 1946), Jeff Torrington (1938-2008), and Irvine Welsh (b. 1958), the plays of Tom McGrath (1940-2009) and Liz Lochhead (b. 1947), the poetry of Tom Leonard (b. 1944), the television dramas of Peter McDougall (b. 1947), and the Scottish films of film-makers Ken Loach (b. 1936), Bill Douglas (1934-1991), Bill Forsyth (b. 1946), Lynne Ramsay (b. 1969), and Peter Mullan (b. 1959).

In contemporary Scottish crime fiction, the negotiation of late modernity is most conspicuous in the hard-boiled appropriations examined in the first chapter of this thesis. These texts, like their American predecessors, directly address contemporary society's moral bankruptcy and the idea that traditional masculinity is in crisis. This thesis argues that such concerns about the ambivalences of modernity feed equally into the gothic, parodic, and soft-boiled variants of contemporary Scottish crime fiction, as the later chapters bear out. The American hard-boiled mode, however, might paradoxically be seen as the ultimate Scottish genre despite not originating in Scotland. Considering the chief characteristics which dominate Scottish art and popular culture outside the crime genre, it becomes clear why the

hard-boiled mode has been embraced in recent Scottish crime fiction. The form provides a context for the kinds of anxieties about class and masculinity, and the attendant constructions of national identity, that have been obsessively formulated in Scottish fiction in recent decades. Addressing such constructions of Scottish identity, broadcaster Stuart Cosgrove, the then Director of Nations and Regions for Channel 4, sparked outrage in 2005 when he was critical of what he saw as Scottish popular culture's negativity. According to Cosgrove, Scottish culture celebrates failure and poverty: 'There is hardly one film made in Scotland by a Scot that is not cast in some dreary, awful, urban, deprived social landscape'.[42] In the public lecture which followed these comments, Cosgrove complains most caustically about post-industrial Scotland's apparent fetishization of grim working-class life, poverty, embittered cynicism, violence, alcoholism, drug addiction, and criminal activity:

> I find myself cursing the hangovers of industrialism – the fake nostalgia for the shipyards, the public monuments to cranes and the stranglehold that the past still has over a city [Glasgow] that in many respects wants to be so effortlessly modern. Most of all, I resent the paralysing grip that the industrial 'hard-man' still has in popular culture. It is virtually impossible to pick up a daily paper that is not obsessed with lumpen violence, or romanticising pathological criminals […] [M]y complaint is with the cumulative and relentless impression that Scotland is a failing and criminal society […] Too much of what we see and hear is sketched in social realism, against the alienated backdrop of the industrial west of Scotland […] What is it about the male cadences of industrial culture that Glasgow should dominate and that through the power of its hammers, its hard drinking and it[s] fake homilies, that it can talk so forcefully and so fraudulently for Scotland?[43]

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[42] Stuart Cosgrove, as quoted in Lorna Martin, 'Outrage as Media Boss say Scots Love Failure', *Observer*, 13 February 2005 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2005/feb/13/uknews.theobserver> [accessed 22 September 2012].

[43] Stuart Cosgrove, 'Innovation and Risk – How Scotland Survived the Tsunami', The Edinburgh Lectures, 16 February 2005 <http://download.edinburgh.gov.uk/lectures/8_Stuart_Cosgrove39s_transcript.doc> p. 2-4. [accessed 5 December 2008].

Some objections should be raised against his analysis. There has been much poverty in Scotland since the 1970s, for instance, and it is only reasonable that Scottish culture should reflect these realities. Furthermore, Scotland's poverty in recent years has not been a voluntary choice. Cosgrove also neglects the rich seam of humour and sincerity in many recent Scottish texts and films. Many of the aspects of post-industrial Scottish culture that Cosgrove discusses here, however, are indeed recurring tropes of Scottish literature, cinema, and art in recent decades. His vigorous criticism of 'the cumulative and relentless impression that Scotland is a failing and criminal society' is paradoxically somehow less relevant to a discussion of Scottish crime fiction. As a form which routinely engages with violence, masculinity, and crime, the hard-boiled mode surely explains and excuses the presence of the negative aspects of Scottish culture which Cosgrove describes, as well as providing an effective vehicle with which to negotiate the legitimacy of such tropes by consciously foregrounding them.

The socio-political realities of Scotland in the years during this project's remit go some way to explaining why such tropes are so prevalent in contemporary Scottish culture. Indeed, the three characteristics that Young attributes to contemporary society – disembeddedness, a pluralism of values, and individualism – have particular resonances in Scotland since the late 1970s for several reasons. In his study *Contemporary Scottish Fictions: Film, Television and the Novel*, Duncan Petrie points to two key political events in 1979 which, he argues, fundamentally shaped Scotland's sense of itself, transforming the trajectory of the nation's cultural

output, and lighting the fuse for the 'unprecedented explosion of creativity' (*CSF*, 2) that he sees as Scotland's second twentieth-century cultural renaissance. The first of these key events outlined by Petrie is what he calls 'the referendum débâcle of 1 March' (*CSF*, 2) in which the campaign for devolution in Scotland was abruptly brought to a contentious standstill by the results of a nationwide referendum. Despite achieving a very narrow majority of the vote, the poor turn-out at the polling stations meant that the campaign for devolution failed, since there was a stipulation that at least forty percent of the electorate would have to vote in favour of devolution for the measure to be realised. It is difficult to discern exactly what the campaign and its outcome meant for Scotland both in political terms and in terms of national self-image. Myriad complicated issues and ambivalences were involved in the campaigns both for and against devolution, as Richard J. Finlay's well-researched and stimulating chapter on the period of Scottish politics demonstrates.[44] What is evident, however, is that, in the light of the whole 'referendum débâcle', questions of what it meant to be Scottish were foregrounded, re-framed, and given a renewed relevance in both material and cultural terms. As Christopher Whyte points out, 'Scottishness is visible, anomalous, [and] problematic in a way Englishness has not yet, and may never become'.[45] The campaigns for and against devolution undoubtedly intensified these conditions of identity that Whyte ascribes to Scotland. For many Scots, the nation's sense of estrangement from the rest of Britain became more exaggerated. Scottishness was defamiliarized, re-emerging from the

[44] Richard J. Finlay, 'Decay, 1976-1987', in Richard J. Finlay, *Modern Scotland: 1914-2000* (London: Profile Books, 2004), pp. 317-357.
[45] Christopher Whyte, 'Introduction', in *Gendering the Nation: Studies in Modern Scottish Literature*, ed. by Christopher Whyte (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995), pp. iv-xx (p. xv).

referendum campaigns with different cultural resonances and a more strident sense of national self-consciousness. This process has been continued with the successful referendum for devolution in 1997, the inauguration of the Scottish Parliament in 1999, and the current campaigns concerning a referendum on complete Scottish independence planned for 2014.

The other key political event of 1979 to which Petrie alludes came just two months after the referendum for devolution: Margaret Thatcher's Conservative Government won the general election. Petrie argues that the policies of this new government caused extensive societal upheaval and a sharp deterioration of already declining conditions throughout Scotland, especially in comparison with other areas of the United Kingdom. He points to the Thatcher Government's 'commitment to economic monetarism and deregulation', which was implemented with 'major reductions in public spending, the privatisation of public utilities, a reversal of progressive taxation and a curbing of the power of the trade unions' (*CSF*, 3). Petrie goes on to explain that, as a direct result of these policies, Britain became 'a more divided and unequal society than at any time since the 1930s', and '[t]he subsequent deep economic recession hit certain parts of the United Kingdom disproportionately hard, particularly those areas such as Scotland that were structurally over-dependent on the traditional heavy industries of coal, steel, shipbuilding and textiles' (*CSF*, 3). Other areas badly hit by the double whammy of the Conservative Government's callously entrepreneurial policies and the severe economic downturn included Wales, with its reliance on traditional industries of coal and steel in the south and slate in the north, and the industrial centres throughout Northern England. Indeed,

perhaps bearing out this thesis's argument that these socio-economic circumstances created a bedrock for dystopian Scottish crime fiction, Val McDermid uses these industrial centres throughout the North of England as settings for much of her hard-boiled crime fiction, and David Peace makes innovative use of Yorkshire in his *Red Riding Quartet* (1991-2002), which might be seen as a literary-political fusion between the work of Alan Sillitoe and James Ellroy. Scotland, however, was something of a special case as it was the largest area and population affected *en masse* which could lay claim to a shared sense of national identity and tradition.

The 1980s, then, is arguably the decade of the twentieth century in which the socio-economic conditions of Scotland exhibited the most marked contrasts against the core of the United Kingdom. Within Scotland, the Thatcher Government's new measures wrought the greatest upheaval on the nation's urban working classes, which formed a sizeable proportion of the overall population. That the Conservative Party's landslide election results in 1983 failed to be replicated in Scotland, where the party only managed to draw 28.4% of the vote, illustrates Scotland's impotence in the face of changes which most adversely affected it and, as Petrie points out, 'served to underline the growing perception that Scotland was being ruled by an increasingly distant and essentially "alien" political ideology' (*CSF*, 3). Indeed, it is not difficult to see why Thatcher's particularly callous variant of individualism, reflected in her now infamous comments on society in 1987, would have further alienated the Scottish people whose dire economic conditions were the direct result of her government's policies:

> I think we have gone through a period when too many children and people have been given to understand 'I have a problem, it is the Government's job to cope with it!' or 'I have a problem, I will go and get a grant to cope with it!' 'I am homeless, the Government must house me!' and so they are casting their problems on society and who is society? There is no such thing! There are individual men and women and there are families and no government can do anything except through people and people look to themselves first.[46]

Like the referendum for devolution, then, the Thatcher government intensified feelings of Scottishness, albeit in an oppositional way. 'After Thatcher came to power I felt alienated and a lot more Scottish', says novelist Iain Banks, adding 'I don't think many people of my generation will ever feel British again'.[47] Indeed, there may be a cathartic element to Banks's own distinctive contribution to the crime genre *Complicity*, discussed at length in the second chapter of this thesis, which features a mass murderer targeting characters who represent the worst excesses of Thatcherism. Addressing the Scottish National Party annual conference in Dundee in 1987, McIlvanney similarly summed up the widespread anomie felt throughout Scotland as a result of the policies of the Thatcher Government:

> We have had bad governments in the past. We have had governments whose awareness of Scotland's problems seemed on a par with their knowledge of the other side of the moon. But we have never, in my lifetime, until now had a government whose basic principles were so utterly against the most essential traditions and aspirations of Scottish life […] For Margaret Thatcher is not just a perpetrator of bad policies. She is a cultural vandal. She takes the axe of her own simplicity to the complexities of Scottish life. She has no understanding of the hard-earned traditions she is destroying. And if

[46] Douglas Keay, 'Aids, Education and the Year 2000!' [An interview with Margaret Thatcher], *Woman's Own*, 31 October 1987 <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/speeches/displaydocument.asp?docid=106689> [accessed 22 September 2010].

[47] Robin Eggar, 'The Dark World of Iain Banks' [an interview with Iain Banks], *The Times*, 14 November 1997.

> we allow her to continue, she will remove from the word 'Scottish' any meaning other than the geographical.[48]

As McIlvanney's comments demonstrate, anxieties about the disintegration of traditional communities, about the growth of corporatism and bourgeois individualism, and about the suppression of local differences have a particular resonance in Scotland throughout the 1980s and beyond, thanks to the specificities of the nation's socio-economic circumstances. As pointed out earlier, crime fiction is particularly well-placed to explore these anxieties because of the tensions inherent within the genre. Its emphasis on transgression, and coming to terms with transgression, means that it frequently provides an expression of these anxieties and functions as a form of cultural complaint.

Because of the sheer scope and range of Scottish crime fiction since the late 1970s, this study is inevitably selective rather than comprehensive. The four chapters, outlined in more detail below, are deliberately arranged to include both the best and most representative examples of Scottish crime fiction, taking in texts that are considered of highest literary quality as well as those that are the most famous or commercially successful. Examples of Scottish crime fiction that engage meaningfully with questions of Scottishness or globalization and thus help to enlarge the thesis's main debates are likewise also included. Despite the care taken to represent the full range of contemporary Scottish crime fiction, some major and many minor authors and works of Scottish crime fiction will inevitably be left out. There are too many relevant authors and works to accommodate detailed, profound

[48] William McIlvanney, 'Stands Scotland Where It Did?' [Speech to the Scottish National Party Annual National Conference, Dundee, September 1987], in *Surviving the Shipwreck*, pp. 241-253 (pp. 245-246).

close analysis of them all in a study of this length. The most pertinent of these omitted works will be indicated, however, within the thesis's discussion of similar or related texts. Texts that precede the thesis's chronological remit, but which are nevertheless important, are likewise referred to in their appropriate contexts.

The four chapters of this thesis contribute to a cohesive extended discussion, but each one reflects clearly discrete aspects of contemporary Scottish crime fiction. They explore the appropriate social and aesthetic contexts extensively, offer a sample of relevant texts, and provide specific, in-depth close analysis of two or three representative case studies of authors or texts. Regarding the level of coverage, this structure gives this thesis critical breadth and depth, conveying the bigger picture that surrounds contemporary Scottish crime fiction and its transatlantic contexts but also soberly illustrating the relevance of these contexts and debates with exhaustive close analysis of particular texts and passages. There are several recurring themes and ideas that are developed over the course of the four distinct chapters. The main area of investigation is Scottish crime fiction's place within national and transatlantic contexts. Each chapter therefore submits its primary material to two related research questions: 'How does it appropriate and comment on existing generic models from outside Scotland?' and 'To what extent is Scottishness a meaningful category to this text?' With regard to the first question, it is the specific nature of the appropriation or commentary that is important, and the analysis therefore revolves around unpacking the particular inflections that the texts apply to their source material's implied values, meanings, aesthetic strategies, ideological assumptions, and cultural resonances. The second question involves a variety of

criteria such the primary material's level of engagement with Scotland's socio-political circumstances, the ways that the tropes, themes, and concerns of contemporary Scottish crime fiction bleed into Scotland's literary and mainstream fiction of the same period, and the peculiarly Scottish resonances that the generic aspects take on in a Scottish context.

The first chapter examines the glut of recent Scottish crime texts that capitalize on the various parallels between the American hard-boiled tradition and post-industrial Scottish fiction, concentrating on their concern with urban working-class masculinity. This nexus of social concerns and generic emphases is most helpfully and interestingly addressed in the crime novels of William McIlvanney, Ian Rankin, and Irvine Welsh. These writers at once participate and intervene in the relevant generic and national traditions. They respond to the crises of modernity facing Scotland in the late twentieth century in a consciously gendered and politicized way, using the genre inventively and dramatizing the ambivalences that are central to both the American tough-guy and the post-industrial Scottish hard man. As such, they chart the changing role of traditional masculinity over the course of the twentieth century, from a position of centrality in organic working-class communities to one of irrelevance and alienation in the more complex, globalized, and individualist social orders that dominate western civilization in the late twentieth century.

Re-engaging with Scotland's pre-industrial past but in such a way that is informed by the same contexts of modernity as the first chapter, the second chapter addresses the gothic and noir flavours of contemporary Scottish crime fiction. It

explores the revealing relations between Scottish fiction, the gothic, and American film noir, demonstrating how these relations underpin a host of recent Scottish crime texts. The chapter opens by arguing that noir is distinct from the hard-boiled tradition in the sense that it provides a gothic response to modernity. It goes on to show how key gothic tropes and questions of modernity carry particular resonances in Scottish society and culture, in both historical and aesthetic terms, owing to the legacies of Calvinism, the Scottish Enlightenment, Scottish literary traditions, and Scotland's unique socio-political circumstances. Many examples of Scottish crime fiction elaborate these connections in interesting and illuminating ways and the chapter therefore provides a survey of relevant texts, before going to engage extensively with two novels that constitute particularly sustained examples of this kind of crime fiction. The first of these case studies is Iain Banks's novel *Complicity*, which uses baroque aesthetic strategies that darkly involve the reader in its wilfully lurid treatment of violence, in order to comment on larger-scale social injustices affecting Scotland. The chapter's analysis of *Complicity* revolves around its use of the split psyche motif and the second-person narrative voice, both of which are contrived to exploit their particular Scottish resonances and to provide a gothic configuration of modernity. The second case study of this chapter is Louise Welsh's *The Cutting Room*, in which an auctioneer investigates the authenticity of an apparent vintage snuff photograph he finds among a deceased gentleman's effects. Like *Complicity*, Welsh's novel self-reflexively explores the dark implications of the sub-genres in which it participates. A significant proportion of the chapter's analysis of *The Cutting Room* is devoted to exploring the parallels that it draws with other

examples of Scottish crime fiction and Scottish gothic, allowing the chapter to engage with a broader range of relevant texts.

The primary material explored in the third chapter is perhaps the least literary in the traditional sense of the word, but the texts are nevertheless equally revealing in regard to the questions about genre and nation that the previous chapters investigate. This chapter, then, explores late 1990s and twenty-first-century examples of Scottish crime fiction that operate in parodic relation to the genre. It opens with a rigorous exploration of the theoretical implications of parody, concentrating especially on how this form relates to more conventional uses of genre, showing that both rely on mechanisms of repetition and variation. The chapter builds on these critical frameworks, arguing that, far from being marginal and irrelevant, Scotland's parodic approaches to the crime genre actually dramatize debates and textual processes that are of central significance to this thesis as a whole. This chapter's consideration of parody's dynamic of repetition and variation is also informed by the thesis's transatlantic emphasis, emerging in the ways that culturally American modes of crime fiction are trans-contextualized to a Scottish setting, replicating some aspects while renovating others. This process, a key feature of all the primary texts explored in the first two chapters, is played out more conspicuously and ironically in Scotland's parodic crime texts, in turn revealing much about the process itself. This chapter uses the work of Allan Guthrie and Christopher Brookmyre as its two main case studies. Standing in for a host of recent Scottish crime writers, Guthrie's work illustrates parodic Scottish crime fiction that lies towards the pastiche end of the spectrum. This chapter explores Guthrie's

repetition and exaggeration of certain stylistic traits and generic conventions of classic American hard-boiled and noir fiction, examining the ways that such blank parodies can nevertheless resonate profoundly within Scottish culture. Brookmyre's work, on the other hand, is used as an example of Scotland's more outlandish, self-consciously parodic crime fiction, commenting obliquely but insightfully on both the American source material and the new Scottish contexts to which it is transposed.

The final chapter examines examples of Scottish crime fiction that can be productively read alongside the culturally English golden-age and soft-boiled traditions. The primary texts in question use rural settings, middle and upper class eccentrics, traditional narrative arcs that are structured around mystery and resolution, plots that tend to revolve around families, and a genteel or whimsical style. There is a surprisingly large and disparate group of Scottish crime texts that provide revealing configurations of these characteristics, often in ways that are distinctively Scottish. The book's transatlantic theme continues, however, since it is argued in the chapter's contextual section that certain aspects and permutations of the English golden-age formula are also an important presence in American crime fiction since the nineteenth century. The first of these relates to the more whimsical side of Scottish crime fiction, and is here represented by M. C. Beaton's Hamish Macbeth novels. Such texts correspond to a coalition between the English golden age and Scottish traditions of the Kailyard, tartanry, and kitschy popular culture. Even with such seemingly lightweight precedents, however, this chapter argues that the crises of modernity explored in the first three chapters are subtly and covertly reprised in the primary texts under consideration here. It is within these nodes of

friction which disrupt the superficial, trivial structures that the texts demonstrate a distinctive Scottishness. Kate Atkinson's Jackson Brodie novels provide the second case study, representing appropriations of the English mode that carry more literary weight. It is argued that these texts offer rich and illuminating configurations of golden-age tropes, while echoing the highly sophisticated, mannered style of Scottish writers such as Muriel Spark (1918-2006) and Elspeth Barker (b. 1940). Like that of these Scottish precedents, Atkinson's work reprises several of the key gothic and noir themes discussed in this book's second chapter, though with less of an emphasis on the contexts of modernity.

Reading the primary material within its transatlantic contexts, then, this thesis unpacks contemporary Scottish crime fiction's valuable contributions to both international and local traditions. It reveals the many ways in which there is a far more meaningful relationship, aesthetically and socially, between Scotland and the crime genre than the one mapped out by James Kelman at the 2009 Edinburgh International Book Festival: 'If the Nobel Prize came from Scotland they would give it to a writer of fucking detective fiction'.[49]

[49] James Kelman, as quoted in Alison Flood, 'James Kelman launches broadside against Scotland's Literary Culture', *Guardian*, 27 August 2009.

1. Hard-Boiled Hard Men: Urban Working-Class Masculinity in the Work of William McIlvanney, Ian Rankin, and Irvine Welsh

What is most interesting about the recent series of hostile exchanges between James Kelman and Ian Rankin, which culminated in the outburst quoted at the end of the introduction, is not their rekindling of a tired debate about the worth of genre fiction.[1] Rather, the points at which the views of the two writers converge reveal much about contemporary Scottish fiction. They may have drastically conflicting ideas about the capacities of crime fiction but the particular social and aesthetic concerns that they express, in critical statements and in their fiction, actually have very similar emphases. What is especially significant to this study is the fact that Kelman and Rankin, arguably the diametrically opposed totems of contemporary Scottish fiction, both conspicuously espouse the kind of anti-elitist, underdog values that characterize the American hard-boiled tradition. Indeed, their debate serves to introduce the main concerns of this chapter, underscoring the intersection between the hard-boiled mode and contemporary Scottish fiction outlined in the introduction. Their exchange has much to say about working-class Scottish life, community, tradition, and masculinity, particularly about how these relate to the distinctively

[1] Phil Miller, 'Kelman Blasts Mediocrity of Boy Wizards and Crime Bestsellers', Herald, 27 August 2009 <http://www.heraldscotland.com/arts-ents/more-arts-entertainment-news/kelman-blasts-mediocrity-of-boy-wizards-and-crime-bestsellers-1.824818> [accessed 22 September 2012]. Alison Flood, 'James Kelman Launches Broadside Against Scotland's Literary Culture, *Guardian*, 27 August 2009 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2009/aug/27/james-kelman-scotland-literary-culture> [accessed 22 September 2012]. Jasper Hamill, 'Literary Scotland Torn Apart over Kelman Spat', *Herald*, 30 August 2009 <http://www.heraldscotland.com/arts-ents/more-arts-entertainment-news/literary-scotland-torn-apart-over-kelman-spat-1.825273> [accessed 22 September 2012]. Alan Bissett, 'Why Kelman's Rage at the Genrefication of Scottish Literature Concerns Us All', *Guardian*, 31 August 2009 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/booksblog/2009/aug/31/james-kelman-scottish-literature> [accessed 22 September 2012].

Scottish crises of modernity delineated in the introduction. After unpacking the implications of Kelman and Rankin's argument, this chapter examines the ways that Scottish appropriations of the hard-boiled mode since the late 1970s refract these concerns in its representations of urban working-class masculinity, using the fiction of William McIlvanney, Rankin, and Irvine Welsh as its main case studies.

It is helpful first to clarify exactly what form this anti-elitism takes in the hard-boiled tradition. In his book *Gumshoe America: Hard-Boiled Crime Fiction and the Rise and Fall of New Deal Liberalism* (2000), Sean McCann reads the development of this American sub-genre in parallel to the specific version of liberal democracy that emerges in American society over the same period. According to McCann's analysis, there are three main concerns shared by New Deal liberalism and the American hard-boiled tradition: 'the competing claims of the elite versus the popular, the demands of market capitalism versus conceptions of quality, and the individual versus a homogenized society'.[2] These concerns clearly resonate with key research themes of this thesis, as outlined in the introduction, since each of these adversarial pairings strikes a chord with the ambivalences of modernity, globalization, and genre fiction. Of the three, it is 'the competing claims of the elite versus the popular' that most characterizes the conflict between Kelman and Rankin, though the two are clearly operating with different conceptions of the elite and the popular.

Elaborating this concern, the first chapter of *Gumshoe America* deals with the hard-boiled mode's origins in *Black Mask* (1920-1951), a pulp magazine which

[2] Sean McCann, *Gumshoe America: Hard-Boiled Crime Fiction and the Rise and Fall of New Deal Liberalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), back-cover. Subsequent references to this text will use this edition with the page numbers indicated in parenthesis.

was notably created to bank-roll the commercially-failing literary periodical *The Smart Set* (1900-1930). Drawing on a range of readers' letters and editorial pieces from *Black Mask*, McCann outlines the hard-boiled tradition's anti-elitist sensibility:

> From its first appearances in the pulp magazines of the 1920s, hard-boiled crime fiction emphasized its populist credentials. These were stories, the genre's writers and fans claimed, with a privileged purchase on 'real life' and a fundamental antipathy to genteel fantasy. Against the 'bunk' of oversophistication, they promised to deliver the stark truths of contemporary society – 'ugly, vicious, sordid, and cruel'. And, at their most grandiose, they linked this antiliterary sensibility to a complaint against social corruption […] Hard-boiled crime fiction, they suggested, offered a popular critique of decadent society. (*GA*, 39-40)

As McCann points out, in parallel to the New Deal, the promoters and readers of hard-boiled crime fiction mythologized their straight-talking sub-genre as the antidote to the kind of social decadence and corruption that had caused the Great Depression. Naturally, this hard-boiled myth is reflected in the conventions of the fiction itself. It is not a coincidence that the original stories revolve around deeply cynical, laconic, working-class males struggling to impose justice on a fallen world riddled with economic inequality and political corruption.

A significant part of the hard-boiled myth has to do with its famously austere style, which is often discussed using economic metaphors. By all accounts, the stories are written exclusively in short, unpretentious sentences, moulded entirely out of everyday vocabulary. Calling Dashiell Hammett 'frugal, spare, [and] hard-boiled', for instance, Raymond Chandler emphasizes his, and by extension the hard-boiled mode's, strong vernacular style: 'He put these people down on paper as they were, and he made them talk and think in the language they customarily used for

these purposes'.[3] Although frequently presented as archetypally hard-boiled, Chandler's own fiction is surprisingly baroque, using such self-consciously cumbersome similes as 'a big man but not more than six feet five inches tall and not wider than a beer truck' and incongruous images harder to picture than the reality they convey such as 'about as inconspicuous as a tarantula on a slice of angel food'.[4] Even ignoring such examples, the economical hard-boiled style is, in its own way, as artificial and rhetorical as any literary style. This more stylized dimension of the form will be analysed in more detail in the third chapter of this thesis. Even if examples do not always fulfil the expectations, it is nevertheless significant that the mode consciously advertises its 'privileged purchase on "real life"' pitting itself against both 'genteel fantasy' and 'the "bunk" of oversophistication'.

The implied social and aesthetic values of this kind of hard-boiled anti-elitism are central to the conflict between Kelman and Rankin. Such values are often mortgaged to constructions of Scottishness. Keith Dixon points out that Glasgow in particular, but Scotland in general, has a 'literary preoccupation with "talking to the people" […] The bulk of published fiction which has emerged from Glasgow over the last two decades has been resolutely, and often aggressively, centered on the working class'.[5] This association is particularly strong after the Thatcher government's policies increased economic inequality in Britain, worsening conditions of poverty and unemployment in Scotland, and generating affluence in the south of England, as discussed in the introduction. These material conditions

[3] Raymond Chandler, 'The Simple Art of Murder', in Raymond Chandler, *The Simple Art of Murder* (New York: Vintage, 1988), pp. 1-18 (pp. 14-15).
[4] Raymond Chandler, *Farewell, My Lovely* [1940] (Middlesex: Penguin, 1949), p. 7.
[5] Keith Dixon, 'Talking to the People: A Reflection on Recent Glasgow Fiction', *Studies in Scottish Literature*, 28 (1993), 92-104 (pp.93-95).

undoubtedly underlie both Kelman and Rankin's suggestion that literature should be about 'real' life and 'real' problems, and that it should cater to 'real' people. It is the exact nature of this relation to 'real life' and the most effective way of catering to 'real' people that is contested between the two writers. Nicholas Wroe gives an account of the original back-handed compliment that Rankin paid Kelman:

> Rankin has said how impressed he was by Kelman's use of Scottish vernacular and how he enthusiastically showed Kelman's stories to his father. "But he said he couldn't read it because it wasn't in English. Now my dad is from the same working-class linguistic community as Kelman writes about. If he couldn't read it, but half of Hampstead was lapping it up, that to me was a huge failure and I decided then not to write phonetically"'.[6]

Here, Rankin sets a premium on a working-class Scottish readership. He suggests that, while it is intuitive that such readers would appreciate fiction rendered in a phonetic transcription of their spoken language, such transcription is, in practice, more alienating than Standard English. Kelman's folly, as far as Rankin is concerned, is further confounded by the fact that his linguistic experimentation is more likely to appeal to bourgeois English sophisticates than the working-class community that it presumes to address. Rankin presents Kelman's work as decadent, esoteric and perhaps even exploitative because, in the move from speech to writing, it corrupts a living working-class language into one of literary exclusivity. Kelman's fiction thereby becomes a foil for Rankin to present his own work as genuinely populist and in line with traditional working-class Scottish communitarian values.

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[6] Nicholas Wroe, 'Bobby Dazzler', *Guardian*, 28 May 2005 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2005/may/28/crime.ianrankin> [accessed 22 September 2012].

Contrary to the view that his writing is elitist in its literary sophistication, however, Kelman's abrasive, expletive-strewn fiction also constitutes an assault on traditional literary values, as shown by Simon Jenkins's famous description of him as 'an illiterate savage'.[7] Although not a direct reply to Rankin's comments, the following comments from an interview with Kelman in 1985 are relevant here:

> language is the culture – if you lose your language you've lost your culture, so if you've lost the way your family talk, the way your friends talk, then you've lost your culture, and you're divorced from it. That's what happens with all these stupid fucking books by bad average writers because they've lost their culture […] So what they're doing, in effect, is castrating their parents, and their whole culture, and saying 'Right, that's fucking rubbish, because it's not the language of books. I speak the language of books, so does everyone I meet at uni, so do the lecturers and so does my new girlfriend, whose father is a fucking book millionaire or something'.[8]

Kelman explicitly takes the opposite view from Rankin on linguistic matters but expresses similar social values. He suggests that his use of language, rather than Standard English, best serves traditional working-class Scottish communities by resisting the spread of bourgeois values facilitated by the top-down standardization of language and culture. Implicit within his remarks about 'bad average writers' who have 'lost their culture', moreover, is the suggestion that his use of language functions to protect a traditional local culture from the ravages of modernity and globalization. In this way, Kelman's comments echo the thoughts of Chris Guthrie from Lewis Grassic Gibbon's *Sunset Song* (1932):

> You saw their faces in the firelight, father's and mother's and the neighbours' [...] you wanted the words they'd known and used, forgotten in the far-off youngness of their lives, Scots words to tell to your heart how they wrung it and held it, the toil of

[7] Simon Jenkins, 'An Expletive of a Winner', *The Times*, 15 October 1994, p. 20.
[8] Duncan McLean, 'James Kelman Interviewed', *Edinburgh Review*, 71 (1985), 64-80 (p. 72).

> their days and unendingly their fight. And the next minute that passed from you, you were English, back to the English words so sharp and clean and true – for a while, for a while, till they slid so smoothly from your throat you knew they could never say anything that was worth the saying at all.[9]

Analysing the above interview with Kelman, Simon Kövesi astutely teases out the wider implications of the metaphors about gender and family that he brings into play, pointing out that they express surprisingly traditional values, not too dissimilar from those articulated in the passage from *Sunset Song*:

> The image of 'castration' is highly charged and clearly masculine. Language 'is the culture', is the source of progeny, is the security of future identity, is the fertility of the male line. To wipe out paternal language with the alien 'language of books' is to deracinate, to betray, to make redundant, to de-bollock. Culture here is something quite fixed, something you should remain 'married' to, something that stays behind if the individual develops and speaks away from it; it is therefore social, community-based, familial.[10]

As Kövesi suggests, Kelman sees his language as being inseparable from a whole range of social values. It may be more alienating on the page than Standard English, as Rankin is keen to point out, but for Kelman, using it is a question of honour and authenticity: 'I wanted to write as one of my own people. I wanted to write and remain a member of my own community'.[11] To abandon his language, or use it only for dialogue, would be to dishonour his parents, his family, and his whole culture. He equates the language that he uses in his fiction with authentic working-class masculinity, community, and tradition in contrast to Standard English, which, by

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[9] Lewis Grassic Gibbon, *Sunset Song* [1932] (London: Jarrolds, 1937), pp. 51-52.
[10] Simon Kövesi, *James Kelman* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), pp. 8-9.
[11] James Kelman, 'Elitism and English Literature, Speaking as a Writer', in James Kelman, *"And The Judges Said…": Essays* (London: Vintage, 2003), pp. 57-74 (p. 63).

implication, is bourgeois, emasculated, and representative of a corrupt individualism with no respect for tradition.

More directly responding to Rankin's remarks, Kelman widened the argument from one about language to one about literariness and the worth of genre fiction. Alerted to Rankin's remarks during a 2008 interview with *The Scotsman*, Kelman said 'Imagine any writer saying something so stupid […] This is like someone saying he decided not to be Kafka but to be Agatha Christie'.[12] The following year, Kelman used his event at the Edinburgh International Book Festival to condemn the 'Anglocentric nature of what's at the heart of the Scottish literary establishment' for the promotion of supposedly mediocre genre fiction by the likes of Rankin and J. K. Rowling at the expense of sidelining high-quality working-class literature by writers such as Tom Leonard and Agnes Owens.[13] According to Kelman, then, Rankin's work in particular, but crime fiction in general, patronizes its implied working-class readership because it deploys the formulae of popular genre fiction and indiscriminately courts as wide a readership as possible. In doing so, Kelman suggests, it thereby sacrifices the local specificities that mark more authentic working-class Scottish literature and, to a certain extent, it plays to the capitalist status quo that it purportedly critiques. That Kelman equates crime fiction with Anglocentrism and Scotland's literary establishment is somewhat baffling, given that the genre has always been, as Denise Mina puts it, 'an outsider art form'

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[12] 'Plain-Talking Glaswegian' [An interview with James Kelman], *Scotsman*, 26 April 2008 <http://thescotsman.scotsman.com/books/Plaintalking-Glaswegian.4022562.jp> [accessed 22 September 2012].

[13] Flood, 'James Kelman Launches Broadside Against Scotland's Literary Culture'. See also James Maxwell, 'A Dissaffection: James Kelman Versus the World', *Glasgow Guardian*, 30 November 2009 <http://glasgowguardian.co.uk/uncategorized/a-disaffection-james-kelman-versus-the-world/> [accessed 22 September 2012].

and 'a bit of a dirty secret'.[14] His opposition to both Anglocentrism and the literary establishment, however, is very much in line with hard-boiled anti-elitism. His rejection of Standard English, as far as Kelman is concerned, is the rejection of the alien language and culture of some wealthy coterie. This rejection has its precedent in the hard-boiled tradition. As Gill Plain points out, Chandler's condemnation of the golden-age mystery, discussed in the introduction, is not simply an attack on English crime writers: 'Chandler's invective is also an assault on "American pseudo-gentility" – that portion of American popular culture that accepts the authority of "Englishness" and seeks to replicate a formula validated by its association with England'.[15] Kelman seems to denounce Scottish crime fiction for similar reasons. As the misguided association he makes between Rankin and Agatha Christie suggests, he seems to assume that all crime fiction adheres to the stereotypes of the culturally English classical and golden-age sub-genres. This assumption, in turn, underlies his argument that Scotland's literary establishment have a vested interest, monetary and political, in promoting the genteel fantasies of lucrative genre fiction at the expense of more authentically Scottish, genuinely working-class literature.

In his earlier essay, 'Elitism and English Literature' (2003), Kelman puts forward the same argument, circuitously implying that genre fiction is simply bourgeois fantasy that distracts from real problems:

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[14] Denise Mina, as quoted in Len Wanner, *The Crime Interviews: Volume Two* (Glasgow: Blasted Heath, 2012), Kindle edition.

[15] Gill Plain, 'Hard Nuts to Crack: Devolving Masculinities in Contemporary Scottish Fiction', in *Posting the Male: Masculinities in Post-War and Contemporary British Literature*, ed. by Daniel Lea and Berthold Schoene (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2003), pp. 55-68 (p. 57).

> Ninety-nine percent of traditional English literature concerns people who never have to worry about money at all […] Or else we are given straight genre fiction: detectives and murderers and cops and robbers […] The unifying feature of genre fiction is the way it denies reality […] But should we expect anything else? Should we expect those in control of power in society to promote and encourage a literature […] about homeless folk having to survive out in the streets [..] drug addiction, child prostitution, glue-sniffing, alcoholism […] police brutality, racial abuses, sectarian abuses, trade-union corruption, political corruption, and everything else that comprises the reality of this country.[16]

Like the hard-boiled readers and promoters quoted by McCann, Kelman is advertising his own work as having a privileged purchase on 'real life', offering a window into the reality of the state, and functioning as a *gallus* inconvenience to those in power. In using the examples he does, however, he betrays a remarkable naivety about crime fiction. All of the subjects that he posits as being off-limits for English literature and genre fiction have been meaningfully dealt with in crime novels. Indeed, championing crime fiction's commercial appeal and accessibility, Rankin cites several of the same examples as Kelman, but posits them as the recurring themes of contemporary crime fiction:

> Certainly, crime novels are designed to entertain. They are the products of popular culture. As such, they make a profit, for no one will subsidize them. Crime fiction may have literary aspirations, but its emphasis on entertainment ensures that these do not frighten away potential readers. In other words, crime fiction is democratic, in that it is *accessible* to the general reader […] In spite of all its exaggerations and heightened effects, crime fiction often tells us more about the world around us than does 'realistic', 'mainstream' or 'literary' fiction. Crime fiction is capable of tackling the bigger contemporary issues in Great Britain – corruption; exploitation; child abuse; violence and the fear of violence [...] As writers we are committed to an *engagement* with the real world. We deal with urban Britain, with its cities, youth problems, drug culture, with the alienation felt by a growing underclass.[17]

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[16] Kelman, 'Elitism and English Literature', pp. 70-72.
[17] Ian Rankin, 'Why Crime Fiction is Good for You', *Edinburgh Review*, 102 (1999), 9-16 (pp. 10-13).

The implications of Rankin's argument about language, quoted earlier, are here extended to genre. He promotes his work as populist and unofficial in contrast to more culturally esteemed forms. He also emphasizes that, unlike much of this kind of self-consciously literary fiction, crime fiction is not beholden to state sponsorship or arts funding. According to Rankin, whatever claims these more respected modes make about representing or critiquing society, crime fiction is better placed to engage with 'the real world' and to 'deliver the stark truths of contemporary society' because it is accessible to a wide readership of ordinary people, cutting through the 'bunk of oversophistication' and avoiding what he sees as the 'huge failure' of Kelman's fiction.

The social and aesthetic concerns negotiated by Kelman and Rankin in the various critical statements quoted above, about populism, social class, masculinity, community, and tradition, are recurring concerns of both the hard-boiled mode and post-industrial Scottish fiction. It is not surprising then that they are central to much Scottish crime fiction. They are readily observable, for instance, in this study's two Year Zero texts: McIlvanney's *Laidlaw* (1977) and Tom McGrath and Jimmy Boyle's *The Hard Man* (1977). Both demonstrate a socialist commitment to representing the social causes of crime and critiquing the forces of law and order, and both engage with pervasive constructions of masculinity in Scottish working-class culture during the twentieth-century. *The Hard Man* approaches this subject matter in a far more overtly stylized, self-reflexive way than *Laidlaw*. It should be pointed out, however, that McIlvanney's fiction is not as mortgaged to a traditional realism as the critical orthodoxy suggests. Beth Dickson follows this orthodoxy

when she describes his style as 'a relaxed naturalism'.[18] While her description is mostly evocative of his work, it runs the risk of overlooking the ways that his fiction subtly negotiates existing literary patterns and conventions.

Although not a realist work, McGrath and Boyle's play nevertheless flaunts a 'privileged purchase on "real life"' on the basis of its lurid subject matter and the fact that Boyle himself was serving a prison sentence for murder at the time of his play's debut. The main character is notorious Glasgow thug called Johnnie Byrne, a fictionalized version of Boyle. Undermining the more problematic aspects of such subject matter, *The Hard Man* attacks the conventions of realism by drawing attention to its own artifice. It employs neo-Brechtian techniques such as characters who directly address the audience, slow-motion fight sequences in the background of such monologues, ironic musical accompaniment, and non-linear storytelling.[19] During the first act, for instance, the main character steps forward from the scene currently unfolding to introduce himself to the audience:

> My name is Byrne. Johnnie Byrne. I was born in the Gorbals District of Glasgow. You've read about me in the newspapers and heard about me in pubs. I'm a lunatic. A right bad lot. What the Judge always calls 'A menace o society'. I'm speaking to you tonight from a Scottish prison where I am serving life-sentence for murder. What you are going to see is my life as I remember it. What you are going to hear is my version of the story. (*THM*, 11)

In the manner of the plays of Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956), *The Hard Man* uses these techniques to politicize the characters and events by discouraging an emotional

[18] Beth Dickson, 'Class and Being in the Novels of William McIlvanney', in *The Scottish Novel Since the Seventies*, ed. by Gavin Wallace and Randall Stevenson (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993), pp. 54-70 (p. 56).
[19] Tom McGrath and Jimmy Boyle, *The Hard Man* [1977] (Edinburgh: Fairplay Press, 2011), p. 60, p. 20, p. 9. Subsequent references to this text will use this edition, with the page numbers indicated in parenthesis.

reaction to them. In foregrounding the constructedness of its representation of reality, moreover, it accentuates the ways in which the reality that it represents is itself mediated. This image of reality as construction is evident from Byrne's talk of the prejudices of newspapers, pub gossips, and even judges, and underscored by his ironic references to himself using clichéd phrases like 'right bad lot' and 'menace o society'. His declaration to the theatre audience that he is 'speaking to you tonight from a Scottish prison' incongruously evokes the rhetoric of television news reporting. The character emphasizes that the play will depict his life but only his 'version of the story', on one level indicating that it is not possible to present an unmediated, objective reality. However, the character and by extension the play nevertheless indicate that they are in a privileged position to cut through the prejudice and present a more authentic version of the story.

The kind of questions about readership and audience dealt with by Kelman and Rankin are also clearly significant to both of these texts. While McIlvanney had consistently written about working-class Scottish life throughout his career prior to *Laidlaw*, his literary reputation for writing dense, involved novels made his foray into the populist world of crime fiction surprising to many of his readers. He recalls the contemporary reactions: 'I discovered to my surprise that I had offended some of my former supporters by degenerating, in their eyes, to the level of detective fiction'.[20] McIlvanney's turn to crime fiction, however, functions in a similar way to his focus on working-class Scottish communities, on the basis that readers from these communities would presumably be more likely to engage meaningfully with a

[20] William McIlvanney, 'The Courage of Our Doubts', in William McIlvanney, *Surviving the Shipwreck* (Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing, 1991), pp. 153-162 (p. 153).

popular genre novel than with the kind of fiction that he had previously produced. *The Hard Man* tackles the thorny question of audience in a striking way:

> There were the haves and the have-nots. I was one of the have-nots. There were the have-nots that worked and the have-nots that thieved, then there were the rest of you – living away out there somewhere in your posh districts in aw your ease and refinement – what a situation! It made me laugh to see you teaching your religions and holding your democratic elections – and it made me sick with disgust. That was why I enjoyed the sight of blood because, without knowing it, it was your blood I was after. (*THM*, 44)

Belying recent Scottish fiction's pre-occupation with 'talking to the people', *The Hard Man* here purposefully underlines the gap between its poor, disaffected protagonist and its implied bourgeois audience. The play's hard-boiled anti-elitism even extends to having the protagonist openly wishing death upon this audience, a particularly provocative way of advertising its marginalized credentials. Although *Laidlaw* and *The Hard Man* are both revealing examples for the contexts of this chapter, *Laidlaw* intervenes in the conventions of the crime genre in a more sustained and meaningful way, and will therefore be the subject of more extensive analysis later.

The theme that connects these two texts, Kelman and Rankin's debate, the American hard-boiled tradition, and post-industrial Scottish fiction is the representation of urban working-class masculinity. This subject matter has received a special attention in Scottish culture throughout the twentieth century. It is especially relevant during the 1930s, in novels such as Lewis Grassic Gibbon's *Grey Granite* (1934), George Blake's *The Shipbuilders* (1935), A. McArthur and H. Kingsley Long's *No Mean City* (1935), and James Barke's *Major Operation* (1936).

Emphasis on urban working-class masculinity has re-surfaced in Scottish writing since the late 1970s, marking the work of McIlvanney, Kelman, Tom Leonard, Jeff Torrington, Irvine Welsh, and many of the nation's crime writers. As Keith Dixon points out, 'The whole corpus of recent Glasgow writing [...] is very much male-centered; solitary, white, working-class, socialistic males abound. And the anguish is very much of a masculine variety'.[21] He also helpfully proposes that 'what distinguishes these writers from their inter-war predecessors is their interest in working-class experience as such, and not as an illustration of or call to political commitment'.[22] These marked historical phases of bringing the urban working-class male into the foreground, first in the 1930s and again since the late 1970s, suggest that the subject matter bears particular relevance under certain material conditions. Richard J. Finlay charts the ways in which the 1980s echoed the 1930s in Scotland:

> In popular Scottish mythology, the eighties match the thirties as the Devil's decade. Living memory has designated this era as the 'Thatcher Years', and the images of this period in Scotland are overwhelmingly dominated by dole queues, factory closures, political strife, and a bleakness which was captured in much of the literature of the time. The contrast with the popular perception of the eighties in much of the south – that it was a time of extravagance, self-indulgence and affluence – could not be greater. Long-term mass unemployment, poverty and an uncaring government were common to both the eighties and the inter-war era.[23]

Although these images of Scotland during the 1980s are generalized, they still convey the actual experiences of a significant portion of the Scottish population: the largely male workforce who were left impoverished, frustrated, and emasculated after being laid off from the nation's traditional heavy industries, because of the

[21] Dixon, 'Talking to the People', p. 103.
[22] Dixon, 'Talking to the People', p. 95.
[23] Richard J. Finlay, *Modern Scotland: 1914-2000* (London: Profile Books, 2004), pp. 341-342.

radical right-wing economic policies of the Thatcher government, as outlined in the introduction.

An aggressively masculine, overtly populist, urban form, the American hard-boiled crime novel represents an ideal model with which to negotiate such thematic topography. *Laidlaw* is arguably the first Scottish novel to capitalize successfully on the capacities of this potentially sophisticated American mode of popular fiction to make sense of certain tensions in post-industrial Scottish life. After all, the hard-boiled mode emerged in America in the late 1920s and crystallized into a state of popular immortality during an era which epitomized severe social, political, and economic hardship for many ordinary American citizens. Like most critics of the hard-boiled mode, Lee Horsley recognizes that the considerable societal traumas experienced by America at this time are not just some kind of vague context in which to understand the sub-genre, but actually constitute the content of the narratives themselves:

> Hard-boiled detective fiction was born in a period of political and economic changes for which people were wholly unprepared: the stock market crash of 1929; the Great Depression; Prohibition and its attendant gangsterism; the growing evidence of illicit connections between crime, business, and politics in rapidly expanding American cities. All of these upheavals and injustices find their way into the detective fiction of the time, as causes of crime that seem incapable of real improvement. A little local order might be restored, but none of the rooted sources of despair are removed.[24]

Where the investigators of earlier analytical detective fiction could use their powers of reason to re-instate an apparently decent and wholesome status quo, the protagonists of hard-boiled fiction find themselves floundering in a fallen world.

[24] Lee Horsley, *Twentieth-Century Crime Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 69-70.

They rely on a combination of chance, physical prowess, and urban savvy, as they ineffectually pursue personal quests for justice within disaffected and unfair societies.

In his introduction to *Tough Guy Writers of the Thirties* (1968), David Madden likewise argues that the sub-genre came into being as a product of the troubled society from which it emerged:

> An unusually tough era turns out the hard-boiled hero. A traumatic wrench like the Depression, its evils and despair touching all facets of human society, causes a violent reaction in these men as they find that they lay down in the great American dream-bed in the Twenties only to wake up screaming in the nightmare of the Thirties. Those hardest hit become the down-and-out, the disinherited, and soon develop a hard-boiled attitude that enables them to maintain a granite-like dignity against forces that chisel erratically at it […] Tough literature was not only one reflection of the times, but one way to live in them. Whether with the gangster or the private detective or other less affiliated outsiders and loners, the disinherited man of the Thirties revolted briefly against the universe itself, or so it must have seemed in the absence of any central figure of authority in a time when all agencies of society were disrupted, disoriented.[25]

Madden's description of the sense of rupture suffered in ordinary American society during the Great Depression exhibits some parallels with Scotland's situation during the late 1970s and the 1980s, discussed in the introduction to this thesis. Although the socio-economic conditions of the two contexts are drastically different in degree, they are nevertheless comparable in kind. Madden's striking image of the archetypal hard-boiled hero developing a 'granite-like dignity' against the inequities of an 'unusually tough era' conveys the quality of brittleness that characterizes the figure. In hard-boiled fiction and post-industrial Scottish culture, the urban working-class male demonstrates these 'granite-like' tensions between hardness and fragility,

[25] David Madden, 'Introduction' (1967), in *Tough Guy Writers of the Thirties*, ed. by David Madden (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1968), pp. xv-xxxix (p. xvii, xxiii).

between callousness and compassion, and between dehumanization and vulnerability. This tension between these contradictory qualities is tersely conveyed in *Laidlaw* in a description of a hard-man character named Bud Lawson: 'A tortoise needs its shell because its flesh is so soft'.[26] Of course, by the time of *Laidlaw*'s publication, the American hard-boiled tradition was going through further significant developments, especially in the cinema. A significant shift in the representation of the American police can be discerned in the films of Don Siegel, shifting from his tight police procedural *Madigan* (1968), complete with its pork-pie-hatted detective heroes, to *Dirty Harry* (1971). In the latter, the hard-boiled hero re-emerged as an insubordinate cop and right-wing vigilante, intolerant of the excesses of the period. Films like Robert Altman's *The Long Goodbye* (1973) and Roman Polanski's *Chinatown* (1974), moreover, drew attention to the myths of the hard-boiled hero in a self-conscious, ironic manner.

The representation of urban working-class masculinity, then, is a significant point of common ground between the American hard-boiled tradition and certain modes of Scottish discourse in recent decades. This cultural interchange is evident in the way that the bulk of Scottish crime fiction replicates the characteristics of the American hard-boiled mode. Admittedly, many of these characteristics have equivalents in more specifically Scottish traditions and others at least bear particular resonances when transposed to a Scottish context. In some cases, it is impossible to separate a Scottish crime text's participation in the conventions of these American sub-genres from its articulation of more authentically Scottish tropes and concerns.

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[26] William McIlvanney, *Laidlaw* [1977] (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982), p. 13. Subsequent references to this text will use this edition, with the page numbers indicated in parenthesis.

Although the American hard-boiled tradition and certain manifestations of post-industrial Scottish culture are both, in some sense, pre-occupied with urban working-class masculinity, it is worth pointing out that neither discourse presents a consistent, standardized treatment of the subject.

In both forms, there are swaggeringly anti-authoritarian figures railing against an unsympathetic society rife with social decadence, corporate callousness, and political corruption. This model often affirms traditional, romanticized constructions of masculinity through the characters' apparently admirable features of stoicism, hard drinking, brute physicality, and streetwise heroism. In its affirmation of the ordinary working man, this model sometimes veers troublingly, however, into manifestations of homophobia, misogyny, and xenophobia. McCann argues, for instance, that the anti-elitist attitudes implicit in hard-boiled American crime fiction developed in close proximity to another, less ambivalent form of 'nativist populism':

> Like the heroes of *Black Mask*'s 'new type of detective story,' Klan ideologues during the twenties railed against class parasites and social decadence. Like the jaundiced private detective, they, too, spotted the signs of corruption in urban vice and moral decline. (*GA*, 40)

The progressive potentials of championing the ordinary working man in post-industrial Scottish culture have also been compromised in some cases by forms of chauvinism, though with less of a racial bent. Focussing on the period between 1966 and 1976, roughly the decade that precedes the publication of *Laidlaw*, Finlay argues that working-class Scottish culture demonstrated particularly reactionary attitudes about gender:

> Machismo and sexism went hand in hand (an appropriate metaphor). They were reinforced in the workplace, which reinforced them at home. Scottish men were caught in a spiralling vortex of manness that women had to put up with […] Working-class male culture in Scotland held that any man who did not work with his hands was a poof, a skiver, a snob, an upstart or any combination of the four. Some Scottish men were sensitive, but it was best to keep this trait hidden.[27]

These unworkable and offensive expectations of masculinity are one of the aspects of post-industrial Scottish life that *Laidlaw* inventively addresses, a topic to be explored shortly in this chapter. In contrast to the problematic celebrations of the urban working-class male, there are also equally problematic denigrations of the figure in both hard-boiled crime fiction and recent Scottish fiction. In this alternative model, condescending representations of the urban working-class male frequently take the form of violent, undisciplined, dishonourable, and animalistic characters. These sensationalized images affirm prejudicial attitudes towards the urban working classes. The most engaging and intelligent representations of urban working-class masculinity to be found in both the American hard-boiled tradition and post-industrial Scottish culture, however, sketch out the ambivalences that exist between these crude extremities. Reflecting this argument, this chapter uses the innovative works of McIlvanney, Rankin, and Irvine Welsh to illustrate different approaches and dimensions of the hard-boiled hard man.

William McIlvanney

McIlvanney's remarkable generation-spanning body of work (1966-present) provides a compelling case study for this thesis's concern with whether Scottish crime fiction can still be distinctively Scottish given its appropriation of an

[27] Finlay, *Modern Scotland*, pp. 278-279.

internationally standardized genre. One approach to this question is to examine the ways that the tropes, themes, and concerns of Scottish crime fiction bleed into those of Scottish fiction outside the crime genre. McIlvanney's work is expedient for this purpose since it replicates the relationship between Scottish crime fiction and Scottish literary fiction in microcosm. *The Big Man* (1985) and his three Laidlaw novels, *Laidlaw* (1977), *The Papers of Tony Veitch* (1983) and *Strange Loyalties* (1991), are crime novels, yet these works co-exist closely with his more literary, less generic works: *Remedy is None* (1966), *A Gift from Nessus* (1968), *Docherty* (1975), *Walking Wounded* (1989), *The Kiln* (1996), and *Weekend* (2006). Overturning the convention of literary writers indulging in genre fiction as a lightweight commercial sideline, McIlvanney's crime novels are defining works in his oeuvre. Aside from *Remedy is None* and *Weekend*, the rest of his fiction, including the crime novels, is firmly set in the same fictive world. *A Gift from Nessus* almost falls into the same standalone category as *Remedy is None* and *Weekend*, but its protagonist Eddie Cameron briefly crops up again as a character in the short story 'Hullo Again' from *Walking Wounded* (1989), a composite novel which unquestionably participates in McIlvanney's fictive world. This world uses the setting of Graithnock, McIlvanney's fictionalized version of Kilmarnock, and involves an ensemble of intricately interrelated characters. The third Laidlaw novel *Strange Loyalties*, for instance, provides an oblique form of narrative closure for the open-ended *Big Man*, features characters that previously appeared in the composite novel *Walking Wounded*, and introduces the character of Tam Docherty, a friend of Laidlaw's who is a descendant of the main characters of McIlvanney's earlier novel *Docherty* and becomes the

protagonist for the subsequent novel *The Kiln*. Beyond specific textual connections of this kind, of course, there are many affinities of theme, style, and subject matter that stretch across all of his novels.

Although several of his earlier non-crime works negotiate the representation of urban working-class masculinity in revealing ways, it is appropriate to begin with McIlvanney's crime fiction. *Laidlaw* is the first of McIlvanney's works to be set in central Glasgow. It explores the geographically specific urban dysfunctions of the locale, drawing on 'the accumulated weight of working-class experience' that McIlvanney attributes to the city: 'The streets of the former Second City of the British Empire are haunted by what the Industrial Revolution has meant to us, the tensions it imposed on the human spirit and the resilience that grew out of the tensions'.[28] As *Laidlaw* demonstrates, hard-boiled crime fiction is particularly well-suited to exploring contemporary manifestations of these tensions. Indeed, Ken Worpole champions *Laidlaw* as 'the most radical attempt [in British writing] to use the detective genre as a way of writing about class and city life from a socialist critical perspective'.[29] In particular, Worpole praises the novel's incisive documentation of 'working-class Glasgow, of the Protestant/Catholic divide, of the deep and self-destructive entrenchments of attitudes about gender roles, and of the Byzantine moral world of an urban police force'.[30] These subjects, especially those of class and gender, are central to post-industrial Scottish fiction. *Laidlaw* uses the hard-boiled mode to facilitate and complicate the representation of such subjects, as well as to contest the more reactionary elements of the sub-genre itself.

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[28] William McIlvanney, 'The Courage of our Doubts', p. 157.
[29] Ken Worpole, *Dockers and Detectives* (London: Verso, 1983), p. 46.
[30] Worpole, *Dockers and Detectives*, p. 46.

Laidlaw introduces Detective Inspector Jack Laidlaw, charting his investigation into the rape and murder of a young girl named Jennifer Lawson by a young, closet homosexual male named Tommy Bryson. At one point in the investigation, Laidlaw is discussing the killer with his colleague Detective Constable Brian Harkness and he says 'In the lives round him, what he's done must make ripples' (*L*, 73). Accordingly, as well as chronicling the police investigation, much of *Laidlaw* is also inventively devoted to exploring the brutal reverberations of this crime on the working-class Glaswegian communities from which Tommy and Jennifer originate. The novel's primary innovation stems, however, from its negotiation of constructions of urban working-class masculinity. In *Laidlaw*, these constructions permeate the police investigation, the domestic circumstances that are depicted, and the Glaswegian criminal fraternities that become involved. McIlvanney's novel appropriates the hard-boiled mode's much celebrated ambivalent nature and its propensity for social commentary, applying these characteristics not only to the ingrained societal injustices of 1970s Scotland, but also redirecting their caustic satiric impulses inwards on the chauvinistic legacy of the genre itself.

It is the remarkable character of Jack Laidlaw that drives the novel and its sequels. Both as a hard-boiled investigator, and as an image of urban working-class masculinity in the West of Scotland, McIlvanney's character satisfies the appropriate criteria but never in a sterile, formulaic way. In him, the conventions are refashioned into something more dynamic and meaningful. Laidlaw's first appearance, for instance, illustrates his world-weariness but complicates the images of jadedness

with a sense that he remains an unsettled individual, still striving to find meaning and purpose, and plagued by painful doubts about his life and work that are as alive to him as ever:

> Laidlaw sat at his desk, feeling a bleakness that wasn't unfamiliar to him. Intermittently, he found himself doing penance for being him […] He was drinking too much – not for pleasure, just sipping it systematically, like low proof hemlock. His marriage was a maze nobody had ever mapped, an infinity of habit and hurt and betrayal down which Ena and he wandered separately, meeting occasionally in the children […] He was a policeman, a Detective Inspector, and more and more he wondered how that had happened. And he was nearly forty […] He felt his nature anew as a wrack of paradox. He was potentially a violent man who hated violence, a believer in fidelity who was unfaithful, an active man who longed for understanding. He was tempted to unlock the drawer in his desk where he kept Kierkegaard, Camus and Unamuno, like caches of alcohol. (*L*, 8-9)

Depression, alcoholism and a failing marriage are the unholy trinity of character traits for the fictional middle-aged hard-bitten city cop. These traits tend to have lost much of their potency through overuse, but here they are expressed in a way that makes them less familiar. The passage eschews the excesses of tough-guy rhetoric, treating these features with tenderness, but without compromising the precision of McIlvanney's characteristic prose style. Laidlaw's depression, alcoholism, and failing marriage are not simply used formulaically as a shorthand way of underlining the strains that his job places on his personal life. Nor do they contribute to a picture of unreconstructed hard-boiled masculinity by affirming hard drinking, philandering, and manly stoicism. With the image of 'low proof hemlock' and its Socratic connotations, Laidlaw's alcoholism is, for instance, represented as a quiet and methodical form of suicidal despair in the face of his own unrelenting search for meaning. The character traits are refashioned further in the later novels. Laidlaw's

tendency to drink lime-juice and soda in macho Glaswegian pubs in *The Papers of Tony Veitch* and *Strange Loyalties*, for instance, is paradoxically more darkly foreboding than his alcoholism in *Laidlaw* because, being a much angrier character in these later novels, it indicates he cannot trust himself with alcohol and the incongruity adds to the smouldering intensity of the character. It is revealing to read Laidlaw's characteristics, which may come across as artfully described generic conventions, in the context of McIlvanney's oeuvre. All of his novels, crime and non-crime, involve urban working-class male characters with failing or broken marriages who encounter debilitating feelings of despair and take refuge in alcohol. Turning to hard-boiled crime fiction, in many ways, must have seemed like a natural move for McIlvanney.

Laidlaw's high-brow reading tastes are not really conventional to the hard-boiled investigator or the working-class males of recent Scottish fiction, though such details are often used in crime fiction as a way of giving an otherwise generic detective the illusion of depth. The existential emphases of the writers in question, moreover, certainly constitute contexts for both bodies of work. The image of the existential detective, for instance, is familiar enough that the title of Alice Thompson's whimsical Portobello-set crime novel *The Existential Detective* (2010) can be readily understood as a joke. As Thompson puts it, 'that title makes me laugh. It's almost tautological. The whole genre of detective writing is about being alienated. It can't have a friendly, social, well-adjusted detective, so calling it *The Existential Detective* just sung out to me'.[31] Laidlaw's sophisticated reading habits

[31] Alice Thompson, as quoted in Len Wanner, *Dead Sharp: Scottish Crime Writers on Country and Craft* (Isle of Lewis: Two Ravens Press, 2011), p. 162.

are also replicated in the early Rebus novels, where it is revealed that Rankin's detective is a voracious reader and that his favourite novel is Fyodor Dostoevsky's proto-existentialist classic *Crime and Punishment* (1866).[32] This now somewhat astonishing aspect of his character is abandoned throughout most of the series, only for his inconsistencies to be self-reflexively satirized in the final Rebus novel *Exit Music* (2007):

> [Rebus:] 'It's about guilt. One of the great Russian novels, in my opinion'.
> [Siobhan:] 'How many others have you read?'
> [Rebus:] 'That's neither here nor there'.[33]

This exchange is clearly part of *Exit Music*'s playfully self-reflexive treatment on the series as a whole, a strategy evident in the novel's re-working of the opening line from the first Rebus novel *Knots & Crosses* (1987): 'The girl screamed once, only the once' (*K&C*, 2); 'The girl screamed once, only the once, but it was enough' (*EM*, 3). Although existential detectives are something of a cliché, then, Laidlaw's reading habits are evidently meant to be taken seriously.

The three writers whose work Laidlaw keeps in his desk drawer, Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855), Albert Camus (1913-1960), and Miguel de Unamuno (1864-1936), all amalgamate philosophy with literature to address existential concerns. Their work does not provide Laidlaw with comfort or relief in the way that the conventional private eye's hidden store of alcohol does, instead functioning to

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[32] Ian Rankin, *Knots & Crosses* [1987] (London: Orion, 1998), p. 39. All subsequent references to this text will use this edition with the page number indicated in parenthesis.
[33] Ian Rankin, *Exit Music* (London: Orion, 2007), p. 54. All subsequent references to this text will use this edition with the page number indicated in parenthesis.

underline his discontent and his quest for meaning. Their work might be more appropriately regarded as anti-philosophy rather than philosophy, since they turn the discipline's principles away from any kind of logical or metaphysical abstraction and focus on the problem of how to live authentically in a world in which the only meaning is that which has to be claimed or created. This problem has important implications both for the formula of the crime novel and for notions of national identity. As Andrew Spicer's comments on existentialism demonstrate, such a worldview is remarkably appropriate to the kind of crime fiction in which McIlvanney's novel participates:

> This philosophy emphasizes contingency and chance, a world where there are no values or moral absolutes, and which is devoid of meaning except those that are self-created by the alienated and confused 'non-heroic hero'. French intellectuals saw in film noir a reflection of their own pessimism and angst.[34]

It is notable, then, that, as Keith Dixon points out, 'McIlvanney has become a major figure in the discussion of crime fiction in France'.[35] The existential context suggested by Laidlaw's reading habits also plays into his uncertainties about his profession and it provides a compelling framework in which to situate hard-boiled crime fiction's qualities of excess and urgency. In his book *In Search of Authenticity: From Kierkegaard to Camus* (1995), Jacob Golomb writes:

> Extreme situations reveal that accepted social values often conflict. We are unwilling to take up these contradictions directly, and prefer to ignore them. Only if it becomes necessary do we beat around the bush in an attempt to straighten things

[34] Andrew Spicer, *Film Noir* (Essex: Pearson Education Limited, 2002), p. 2.
[35] Keith Dixon, '"No Fairies. No Monsters. Just People": Resituating the Work of William McIlvanney', in *Studies in Scottish Fiction: 1945 to the Present*, ed. by Susanne Hagemann (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1996), pp. 187-198 (p. 195).

> out, usually arriving at an artificial compromise. We constantly avert our eyes from the dilemmas of our working values, and avoid definite engagements one way or the other. These conflicts come to the surface when an existential emergency calls for immediate action.[36]

Laidlaw finds himself in various extreme situations throughout the three novels, such as persuading Bud Lawson not to perform an act of brutal vigilantism against Tommy at the end of *Laidlaw*, obsessively attempting to convince his colleagues to re-consider their conclusions in *The Papers of Tony Veitch*, or uncovering the dark details surrounding his brother's suicide in *Strange Loyalties*. In light of the existential context, then, these extreme situations play a more significant role than contributing to the entertainment by providing sensational plot climaxes. Indeed, although they are not situations likely to be encountered in daily life, they are still more grounded than those found in many other hard-boiled crime novels. The novels of Allan Guthrie and Christopher Brookmyre, whose works are analysed in the third chapter of this thesis, serve as particularly potent, recent Scottish examples of the inflated, stylized, and unapologetically unrealistic form of crime fiction. In the Laidlaw novels, the more heightened situations that Laidlaw encounters are catalysts forcing the protagonist towards existential crisis points, making him overwhelmingly aware of his existence, his freedom, and his responsibility. As McIlvanney says, 'I wanted somebody who could, who would go to some kind of front-line of contemporary experience, who would have to subject his ideas, his attitudes, his morality, such as it was, to severe pressure'.[37]

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[36] Jacob Golomb, *In Search of Authenticity: From Kierkegaard to Camus* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 25.
[37] Isobel Murray and Bob Tait, 'Plato in a Boiler Suit: William McIlvanney', in *Scottish Writers Talking*, ed. by Isobel Murray (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 1996), pp. 132-154 (p. 142).

Connected to this overwhelming sense of responsibility is the inherent tension between Laidlaw and his job, which is handled in a similar way to the treatment of the other generic conventions. He is not a pale imitation of the hackneyed American cop who plays by his own rules. The reasons Laidlaw finds himself questioning his decision to become a police officer in the scene cited above are revealed to stem from a more local and specific root. In his autobiographical essay, 'Growing Up in the West' (1970), McIlvanney begins by listing various experiences and attitudes intended to demonstrate that he 'served [his] adolescence and graduated to what [he] take[s] for manhood in the working class of the West of Scotland'. The list mainly consists of homely and nostalgic details such as 'I think broth is always better the second day but I don't like my chips back-het'. He concludes, however, on a more serious point: 'And I don't like policemen'.[38] McIlvanney's position is a convention of Scottish working-class culture. It is flagged up frequently in *No Mean City*, for instance, where even the victims of the novel's infamous violent razor gangs do not give evidence to the police, in deference to the community's unspoken code of honour.[39] Given his predisposition, then, it seems surprising that McIlvanney should later write three novels in which the main character is not only a policeman, but one who is a genuinely heroic, compassionate, and human figure. This disparity, however, is central to the novels. Indeed, McIlvanney's professed antipathy towards the police, which he presents as a culturally-ingrained aspect of working-class culture in the West of Scotland, finds expression throughout the Laidlaw novels, not least in the views of Laidlaw himself.

[38] William McIlvanney, 'Growing Up in the West', in *Memoirs of a Modern Scotland*, ed. by Karl Miller (London: Faber and Faber, 1970), pp. 168-178 (pp. 168-169).
[39] A. McArthur and H. Kingsley Long, *No Mean City* [1935] (London: Corgi, 1978), pp. 41-42.

At one point in *Laidlaw*, he wonders 'if it was possible to be a policeman and not be a fascist' (*L*, 14). Later in the novel, when Harkness is shocked that Tommy's mother has covered up for her son, who, it must be remembered, has anally raped and strangled an innocent young girl to death, Laidlaw starkly admits 'I would expect my mother to do the same for me. Home is where they'll hide you from the polis' (*L*, 210). Although expressed in a couthy way, this is a radical position, underlining the fact that the police are clearly antithetical to Laidlaw's notions of community and tradition.

The wider social, historical, and political contexts of this cultural aversion to the police are astutely explored in the novels. It is revealed, for instance, that Harkness's father, a character with whom Laidlaw feels a natural kinship, finds it difficult to accept his son's choice of profession due to his own experiences of the police during an earlier period of widespread economic hardship:

> His father had left school during the Thirties. He hadn't found a permanent job till after the war. He remembered the way the police had treated strikers and hunger-marchers in the West of Scotland. He hated them simply and sincerely, and he couldn't forgive his son for becoming one of them. (*L*, 44-45)

It is worth pointing out that, when *Laidlaw* was published, such experiences were still in living memory for many urban working-class Scots. In the 1970s, moreover, Scotland's unemployment rates echoed those of the earlier era, notably peaking at 160,000 in the year that McIlvanney's novel was published.[40] A cultural hostility towards the police is also hinted at in an earlier passage in *Laidlaw*, which describes

[40] Finlay, *Modern Scotland*, pp. 327-328.

the clenched fists of the formidable Bud Lawson, whose daughter Jennifer has gone missing:

> They were enormous hands that had driven rivets on Clydeside for thirty years. They weren't used to being helpless. Just now they signalled an anger that, lacking a focus, took in everything. Bud Lawson was angry with Laidlaw, the police, his daughter, the city itself. (*L*, 16)

There is a striking economy about these sentences. In such proximity to the indirect revelation that Bud was a Clydeside shipbuilder, the description of his hands as not 'used to being helpless' conjures up an association between the two details. The human specificity of Bud's impotent frustration at his missing daughter seems to be textually collided against similar feelings experienced by many working-class Scottish men as a result of rising unemployment in Scotland's traditional heavy industries. Bud's anger with Laidlaw and the police is not readily understandable in the immediate context because, in this instance, they are helping to look for his daughter. It is a fair assumption, then, that Bud resents having to turn to them for help because he feels the same instinctive cultural hatred of the police as McIlvanney, Laidlaw, and Harkness's father.

The wider issues that underlie this antipathy are further explicated in *The Papers of Tony Veitch*, when Laidlaw alienates himself from his colleagues. He refuses to accept their convenient conclusion of accidental death for a homeless, alcoholic character named Eck Adamson or their verdict of suicide in the case of Tony Veitch. These are examples of the kind of 'artificial compromise', arising from a conflict in social and working values, that Golomb pits against living authentically. In the former example, after insinuating that the police neglect their responsibilities

when the victim of a crime is as destitute, disreputable, and as unlikely to make the papers as Wee Eck, Laidlaw extensively outlines what he sees as the fundamental tension between himself and his profession:

> I don't know what you feel about this job. But it fits me as comfortably as a hair-shirt. All right, I do it. Because sometimes I get to feel it matters very much. But not if I'm just a glorified street-sweeper. Filling up Barlinnie like a dustbin. There have to be some times when you don't just collect the social taxes. You arrange a rebate. If all I'm doing is holding the establishment's lid on for it, then stuff it. I resign. But I think there can be more to it. One of the things I'm in this job to do is learn. Not just how to catch criminals but who they really are, and maybe why. I'm not some guard-dog. Trained to answer whistles. Chase whoever I'm sent after. I'm not just suspicious of the people I'm chasing. I'm suspicious of the people I'm chasing them *for*. I mean to stay that way […] So, Wee Eck. If the law works for them, it should work for him. If he died in a penthouse, let's hear you say the same.[41]

Laidlaw's image of his job as a hair-shirt suggests that he sees it as a self-imposed punishment, echoing his feeling that he is 'doing penance for being him'. The attitudes and values that he expresses here are consistent with the kind of anti-establishment, underdog sentiments that Kelman and Rankin negotiate in the critical statements cited in the opening section of this chapter. With commitments and uncertainties of this kind, Laidlaw represents a fantasy version of a police officer. He agonizes over the nature of his authority and the dizzying responsibilities it brings. He is acutely aware of, and attempts to counter-act, the institutionalized prejudices of his profession. He resists any notion that the police should be there simply to protect bourgeois property values and to contain society's deviant criminal minority. Like their protagonist, the Laidlaw novels similarly resist upholding such

[41] William McIlvanney, *The Papers of Tony Veitch* [1983] (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1996), p. 68. Subsequent references to this text will use this edition, with the page numbers indicated in parenthesis.

an ideological position and buying into the naïve worldview implied by it, marking the novels out from more traditional examples of the genre.

In being 'suspicious of the people [he's] chasing [the criminals] *for*', Laidlaw gestures towards the legitimized corruption and ingrained societal injustices of the respectable straight world, which are at once causes of crime and forms of crime in themselves. Johnnie Byrne from *The Hard Man* even more keenly draws attention to the injustices of the straight world, comparing them to his own illegal and violent money-lending: 'Let's face it. The whole human world is a money-lending racket and if it takes a man's whole lifetime to kill him with his debts, that doesn't make it any the less an act of murder!' (*THM*, 54). This parallel between illegal activity and the structural, systemic injustices of capitalist society, whereby the former becomes the more honourable, less hypocritical version, is a recurring theme in the hard-boiled tradition. Given the socio-political circumstances of Scotland throughout the 1980s and 1990s, outlined in the introduction, it is not surprising that this theme plays a major role in recent Scottish crime fiction. Its most sustained treatment can be found in Iain Banks's *Complicity* (1993), which is analysed extensively in the second chapter of this thesis, but McIlvanney fervently deploys the theme in a variety of contexts.

Given the histrionic affirmations of unadulterated machismo found in the hard-boiled mode, a particularly notable example of one such culturally entrenched injustice explored in *Laidlaw* is that of homophobia. Traditionally, of course, the hard-boiled and noir variants of crime fiction tend to be transparently homophobic: a tendency worth explicating further at this point. In Chandler's *The Big Sleep* (1939),

his private detective Philip Marlowe visits the apartment of a deceased homosexual aesthete called Arthur Gwynn Geiger, who turns out to have been an illegal pornographer and blackmailer. Chandler's representation of Geiger's apartment as a hotbed of repugnant garishness and tasteless faux exoticism indulges homophobic stereotypes:

> The place was horrible by daylight. The Chinese junk on the walls, the rug, the fussy lamps, the teakwood stuff, the sticky riot of colours, the totem pole, the flagon of ether and laudanum – all this in the daytime had a stealthy nastiness, like a fag party.[42]

Indeed, Marlowe's use of the word 'nastiness', which is repeated at the end of the novel in his bleak admission that he has become 'part of the nastiness now', forges an association between homosexuality and the murky world of corruption and criminality.[43] There are, admittedly, more ambivalent aspects to Chandler's representation of homosexuality. While Geiger is condemned, his tough-guy lover Carol Lundgren is depicted more respectfully, indicating that Marlowe's casual homophobia is more to do with a celebration of traditional masculinity rather than a thorough-going revulsion to homosexuality.

Mickey Spillane's right-wing, ultra-hard-boiled, and aggressively masculine private investigator Mike Hammer, however, is brazen in his homophobia. In *Vengeance is Mine!* (1950), Hammer visits a 'fag joint' and describes its patrons in ways that suggest they are a different species:

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[42] Raymond Chandler, *The Big Sleep* [1939] (Middlesex: Penguin, 1948), p. 66.
[43] Chandler, *The Big Sleep*, p. 220.

> Maybe ten eyes met mine in the mirror and tried to hang on, but I wasn't having any. There was a pansy down at the end of the bar trying to make a guy who was too drunk to notice and was about to give it up as a bad job. I got a smile from the guy and he came close to getting knocked on his neck. The bartender was one of them, too, and he looked put out because I came in with a dame.[44]

The deeply problematic implication in this scene is that Hammer represents the epitome of hard-boiled masculinity and, as such, is irresistible to any homosexual male. Such attention, as far as Hammer and Spillane are concerned, both necessitates and vindicates violent chastisement. Indeed, Spillane's oeuvre in general is a potent example of the kind of hard-boiled crime fiction that McCann argues developed in parallel with the Ku Klux Klan, in the sense that it presents the heterosexual, white working-class male as a figure in crisis, constantly under threat from marginalized groups of various kinds. Its fascist sentiments are presented as down-to-earth, commonsensical responses to what it sees as un-American forms of social decadence and corruption, which, in this case, seem to consist principally of any groups of people who do not conform exactly to traditional images of American identity.

Classic film noir also frequently uses stereotypical motifs of homosexuality as signifiers of psychosis, deceit, and corruption, though typically in more oblique ways, thanks to the demands of Motion Picture Production Code (1930-1968). Waldo Lydecker, the foppish but deeply disturbing villain portrayed by Clifton Webb in Otto Preminger's *Laura* (1944) might not be an overtly gay character but the film exploits the crisp affectations and homosexual stereotypes of his performance to align the character with decadence and evil. Spicer identifies Lydecker as an example of a '*homme fatale*', arguing that the film's revelation that

[44] Mickey Spillane, *Vengeance is Mine!* [1950] (London: Corgi, 1969), p. 63.

he is the unhinged and obsessive murderer is 'not that unexpected, as Lydecker's dandified effeminacy would always mark him, in a Hollywood film, as impotent, sexually repressed or deviant'.[45] Several of Alfred Hitchcock's noirish crime thrillers, such as *Rope* (1948) and *Strangers on a Train* (1951), use the conventional signifiers of homosexuality in a similar way, as many critics have noted.[46] To offer another, particularly disturbing example, Mike Hodges's British crime film *I'll Sleep When I'm Dead* (2004) revolves around a working-class criminal called Davey who is raped by another man, and commits suicide as a result. Later in the film, a coroner conjectures that Davey involuntarily ejaculated during the rape and killed himself because of the shame. The representation of homosexuality and its signifiers in hard-boiled and noir fiction, then, tends overwhelmingly towards the negative.

Laidlaw's representation of homosexuality is another of those instances in which the novel both participates and intervenes in a convention of the genre, facilitating its negotiation of Scottish working-class masculinity. Its use of a closet homosexual character as its murderer replicates the convention of connecting homosexuality with a violent psychosis but it handles this convention with a critical distance. Breaking with convention, both McIlvanney and his hard-boiled fictional investigator consistently treat Tommy Bryson sympathetically. They also re-apportion his culpability in a more appropriate way, recognising that his damaged psychiatric state and his crime are at least partly the result of a complex range of wider social factors, including the unsustainable expectations of masculinity fostered

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[45] Spicer, *Film Noir*, p. 90.
[46] See Robin Wood, 'The Murderous Gays: Hitchcock's Homophobia', in Robin Wood, *Hitchcock's Films: Revisited* (London: Faber and Faber, 1991), pp. 336-357. See also D. A. Miller, 'Anal *Rope*', *Representations*, 32 (1990), 114-133.

in his working-class Scottish community. Finlay's account of working-class male culture in Scotland during the period, cited earlier, attests to the forcefulness of these expectations of manhood. *Laidlaw*'s representation of homosexuality, then, exploits hard-boiled crime fiction's capacities for representing the social causes of crime and for recognizing that these causes are often deeply embedded in mainstream society. As Laidlaw says, 'The idea that the bad things can happen somehow of their own accord, in isolation. Without having roots in the rest of us. I think that's just hypocrisy. I think we're all accessories' (*L*, 186). In contrast, his rival police officer, the belligerent Ernie Milligan, says 'I've got nothing in common with thieves and con-men and pimps and murderers. Nothing! They're another species' (*L*, 52). Laidlaw makes the same point throughout the three novels in a variety of contexts, before reaching a self-consciously absurd conclusion in *Strange Loyalties*: 'My ideal dock would accommodate the population of the world. We would all give our evidence, tell our sad stories and then there would be a mass acquittal and we would all go away and try again'.[47]

The striking narrative voice used in the opening chapter of *Laidlaw* upholds this worldview by representing the murderer in the most sympathetic way possible. The focalizer of the scene is Tommy Bryson but the chapter is written using the rare second-person narrative voice. This particular use of the second-person narrative voice, referring to a specific character, rather than addressing the reader or outlining general circumstances, has an interesting resonance in twentieth-century Scottish literature. It is used particularly inventively in Iain Banks's *Complicity*, so the prevalence and import of this device will be discussed further in the second chapter

[47] William McIlvanney, *Strange Loyalties* [1991] (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1992), p. 10.

of this thesis. In *Laidlaw*, however, the second-person narrative voice very obviously serves to align the reader with Tommy from the start:

> Running was a strange thing. The sound was your feet slapping the pavement. The lights of passing cars batted your eyeballs. Your arms came up unevenly in front of you, reaching from nowhere, separate from you and from each other. It was like the hands of a lot of people drowning […] But there *was* nowhere that you knew about, not even this place where you came and stood among people, as if you were a person. You could see who people thought was you in the mottled glass […] You were a monster. How had you managed to hide from yourself for so long? (*L*, 5-7)

For Tommy, overwhelmed as he is with guilt, everything seems disconnected and unreal. Frequently reversing the expected relationship between subject and object, the febrile, faltering, and child-like sentences present Tommy not as a murderous psychopath but as a very human character. He seems more a victim than a villain. With the mirror motif and the idea of a repressed self hidden from the subject's conscious self, the passage also echoes Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886), which will be discussed in more detail in the second chapter of this thesis. It is an interesting allusion to deploy here, though, because the dark, mysterious relationship between the two men and the blackmail motif in the early chapters of *Jekyll and Hyde* seem to court an interpretation involving homosexuality, which was still illegal in the United Kingdom at the time.

Later in McIlvanney's novel, Laidlaw confronts the sense of the word 'monster' as it is used in this opening, when he explains to Harkness that 'monstrosity's made by false gentility. You don't get one without the other. No fairies, no monsters. Just people' (*L*, 71). The use of the word 'fairies', a pejorative term for homosexual males, is significant, suggesting that the construction of

homosexuality as willowy, immature, and effeminate is as misguided and ideological as labelling criminals 'monsters', an important point that both Laidlaw and the novel take pains to argue. There emerges a sense in the novel that Tommy tried to form a 'healthy' and 'normal' relationship with Jennifer, and therefore eventually ended up killing her, because of the demands placed upon him by his society. It is worth pointing out that these pressures are not entirely formed on gender lines, since it is revealed that it was the sectarian divide that prompted Jennifer to keep her relationship with Tommy a secret from her violent, bigoted father. The novel makes it clear, however, that Tommy's denial of his sexuality, and his resultant psychological dysfunction, do stem from the implicit demands of his masculine working-class community. His boyfriend Harry Rayburn reflects on these demands, and his standpoint, as filtered through free indirect discourse, notably echoes Laidlaw's own views on criminal responsibility:

> Finding himself becoming one thing, he had rushed to try to prove himself another. Harry thought he understood the pressures that had made him make the attempt. They were a kind of absolution, as far as he was concerned. A lot of people had been present at that murder. Why should one person answer for it? (*L*, 113)

This passage functions not only as a further articulation of the idea that all members of a society are in some sense morally culpable in its crimes and injustices, but it also indicts the unhealthy culture of machismo that the novel forcefully presents as integral to the West of Scotland at the time. Set in St Andrews in 1978, Val McDermid's *The Distant Echo* (2003) offers another well-executed example of recent Scottish crime fiction which uses the hard-boiled style to critique the homophobia and aggressive masculinity of 1970s Scotland. Louise Welsh's *The*

Cutting Room (2002), discussed in the second chapter of this thesis, provides yet another recent Scottish intervention in crime fiction's representation of homosexuality.

The culture of machismo that characterizes traditional working-class Scottish communities, exemplified by the cult of the Scottish hard man, is central to McIlvanney's fiction. Christopher Whyte defines the Scottish hard man: 'He comes from a working class or at most a lower middle-class background, is often represented as unemployed, and is the victim of injustice and discrimination on a class basis'.[48] Echoing the arguments that Kelman puts forth about language and identity, Neil McMillan points out that the figure represents an exclusionary coalition of nationhood and masculinity:

> Through his involvement with hard, physical work, his interest in sports and betting, his love of drink, his place at the heart of family and community, and his earthy Scots speech, it is not only ideal masculinity but ideal national identity which belongs to the stereotypical Scottish working-class male. For his bourgeois counterpart, working in a different relationship to his body, removed from the traditional village or inner-city community, and encouraged through schooling and convention to anglify his speech, such distance from the ideal proletarian type results in feelings of both denationalization and feminization.[49]

The Scottish hard man is best exemplified in *Laidlaw* by characters such as Bud Lawson, and the career criminals such as Matt Mason, John Rhodes, Minty McGregor and the impressionable apprentice hard man Lennie Wilson. Further gangland thugs and petty criminals who match the description are added in the

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[48] Christopher Whyte, 'Masculinities in Contemporary Scottish Fiction', *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 34.3 (1998), 274-285 (p. 274).

[49] Neil McMillan, 'Heroes and Zeroes: Monologism and Masculinism in Scottish Men's Writing of the 1970s and Beyond', in *Posting the Male: Masculinities in Post-War and Contemporary British Literature*, ed. by Daniel Lea and Berthold Schoene (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2003), pp. 69-87 (p. 69).

subsequent Laidlaw novels, such as Cam Colvin, Panda Paterson, Dave McMaster, and Hook Hawkins. Describing the physical violence that these characters commit is not something on which the novels dwell, however. Most of it is not directly depicted. The passages that involve these hard men are characterized instead by bravado, intimidation, verbal sparring, and emotional violence of the most brutal kind. Despite not being physically harmful in itself, for instance, one of the most repugnant acts of violence described in McIlvanney's fiction is the scene in *The Papers of Tony Veitch* in which Panda Paterson very slowly and carefully pours his pint over Sammy's head: 'The slower that gentle decanting was, the more fully it demonstrated Sammy abjectness. The others watched him pass from shock to a strangled anger to a smothered attempt to get up, to a terrible understanding of himself' (*TPOTV*, 35). Although not as violent as the aforementioned characters or his hard-boiled predecessors, Laidlaw himself exhibits many of the key characteristics of the generic and national archetypes. Counteracting any potential torpor brought on by his crippling doubts about his job and his wider existential malaise, he relies on similar artillery to the Scottish hard man or the hard-boiled investigator: a carapace of abrasive deadpan wit, a generally tough attitude, a streetwise sensibility, and occasional acts of carefully considered violence. He also embodies the liminal position common to both the urban hard-boiled protagonist and its main fictional precursor, the frontier hero: 'running about no man's land with a German helmet and a Black Watch jacket' (*L*, 52).

In one scene, Laidlaw and Harkness are required to visit Rhodes's local pub, a hot-bed of pent-up violence and oppressive masculinity, ironically named 'The

Gay Laddie', prompting Laidlaw to warn Harkness: 'Do yourself a favour […] Don't misinterpret the name' (*L*, 94). The description of the establishment and its patrons encapsulates the ambivalence of McIlvanney's handling of the Scottish hard man:

> Physically, it was a shrine to the Thirties, when the Depression had spawned the razor-slashers and brought King Billy of Bridgeton to prominence […] you were in the presence of a lot of physical pride, a crowd of it, so that you sensed the need to move carefully, in case you bumped an ego. This room was the resort of men who hadn't much beyond a sense of themselves and weren't inclined to have that sense diminished. (*L*, 94)

For the working classes in the West of Scotland, the 1930s is hardly a period to get nostalgic about, and the passage points out this very paradox with its allusions to the period's violent sectarian gang culture. Like much of McIlvanney's fiction, *Laidlaw* plays out a similar ambivalence in terms of its representation of violence and masculinity. In keeping with McIlvanney and Laidlaw's insistence that all aspects of working-class life should be handled with respect and understanding, even the stifled, backwards-looking atmosphere of unchecked masculine aggression in The Gay Laddie is not overtly condemned, ridiculed, or patronized. The pub is a contemporary, albeit more compromised, version of the High Street in *Docherty*: a meeting-place for a group of men, akin to an Anglo-Saxon comitatus. Although not part of the pub's regular entourage, and set apart by virtue of being a 'polisman', Laidlaw's experience and hard-boiled street-wisdom mean that he is able to negotiate the intangible behaviour code of The Gay Laddie successfully. He first uses a Chandleresque wisecrack to assert his authority and elicit a straightforward response from the bartender: 'I didn't come in here to see a bad cowboy picture. You

know who I am'. He then rectifies Harkness's schoolboy error of turning down a drink from Rhodes, before indulging in sophisticated verbal sparring with the latter: 'Like hand-wrestling without the hands' (*L*, 95-99). Laidlaw's competence in the sphere of the traditional Scottish hard man is crucially tempered, however, by his compassion and his politically progressive stance, as is evident when he later reproaches Harkness for his homophobia:

> [Laidlaw:] 'When you think of the crappy attitudes like yours he's had to cope with, he's made not a bad job of surviving. You can almost admire him'.
> [Harkness:] 'I can't help it. I just hate their guts'.
> [Laidlaw:] 'So that'll worry us. Marlowe was a poof. And his farts were more articulate than most mouths' (*L*, 210-211).

Given his high-brow reading tastes, Laidlaw is presumably referring here to the dramatist Christopher Marlowe (1564-1593), but there is a tantalizing alternative possibility that he is referring to Chandler's witty and urbane detective Philip Marlowe, since some critics have interpreted a latent homosexuality in the character. Plain, for instance, argues that 'Marlowe's world of masculine excess [is] an environment within which the homosocial is celebrated and a legitimized homoeroticism emerges'.[50]

For all its sympathy with Tommy, its criticism of the West of Scotland's working-class culture of machismo, and Laidlaw's anti-homophobic stance, though, *Laidlaw* retains a profound ambivalence on these matters. Indeed, even as he admonishes Harkness, Laidlaw invokes the kind of derogatory slang and vulgar humour that would align him with traditional modes of urban working-class

[50] Gill Plain, *Twentieth-Century Crime Fiction: Gender, Sexuality and the Body* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2001), p. 78.

masculinity in the West of Scotland. *Laidlaw*'s representation of these traditional modes of masculinity continually fluctuates between attraction and repulsion, between understanding and condemnation. The novel's short final chapter brings this kind of fluctuation to the surface. The novel first celebrates Laidlaw's fleeting masculine victory over Milligan for intimidating the suspect, in which he throws him against a wall in an assertion of his manliness. Conversely, he then shows great sympathy to Tommy with an understated gesture that foregrounds the common humanity between them. He brings him a cup of tea and, when the boy expresses incredulity, he explains 'You've got a mouth, haven't you?' (*L*, 224). Retaining this ambivalence between compassion and hardness is a necessary part of McIlvanney's strategy of creating meaning. Indeed, Laidlaw mirrors the contradictions of his city: 'a place so kind it would batter cruelty into the ground' (*TPOTV*, 262).

In addressing McIlvanney's representation of violence and the Scottish hard man, it is worth examining some of McIlvanney's more literary, less overtly generic novels in order to demonstrate how certain tropes and anxieties of his crime fiction overlap with those of his fiction which, by virtue of not participating in an internationally standardized genre, might be considered more distinctively Scottish. *Docherty* is a good example because several of its tropes and themes match up well with the Laidlaw novels and, as Irvine Welsh points out, it is one of the top five most critically well-regarded Scottish novels since the 1970s.[51] Following in the tradition of mining novels such as Émile Zola's *Germinal* (1885) and D. H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers* (1913), *Docherty* follows the inter-generational stories

[51] Irvine Welsh, 'Foreword', in Ron Butlin, *The Sound of My Voice* (London: Serpent's Tail, 2002), pp. vii-xi (p. vii).

of a miner named Tam Docherty and his son Conn. It depicts their highly organic working-class community in Graithnock coming to terms with aspects of modernity that threaten to erode their communal values and assumptions, such as capitalism, industrial decline, the Great War, and increased opportunities for social mobility and higher education.

Something of a precursor for characters like Laidlaw but also very much a product of his own time and place, Tam is physically powerful and impulsive, yet uncommunicative and self-destructive. Indeed, in *Strange Loyalties*, Laidlaw makes the lineage between Tam and hard-boiled urban investigators like himself explicit when he describes Tam as 'a legend in Graithnock before we were born, a street-fighter for justice' (*SL*, 128). The working-class masculine culture from which Tam emerges fosters and celebrates the figure of the traditional Scottish hard man:

> High Street was very strong on rights. Though these might not be easily discernible to an outsider, they were very real in the life of the place, formed an invisible network of barriers and rights-of-way. It was morality by reflex to some extent, motivated often by not making the terms of an already difficult life impossible. Yet there was as well behind it a deep if muffled sense of what it meant to be a man, a realisation that there were areas which were only your own, and that if these areas were violated formidable forces might be invoked.[52]

Various critics are uncomfortable with what they see as the novel's veneration of Tam, arguing that the novel celebrates his physical prowess, his oppressive masculinity, and his violence.[53] One illuminating example from the novel comes when an Irish 'Peepin' Tom' comes into the High Street one night and begins

[52] William McIlvanney, *Docherty* [1975] (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1987), p.33. Subsequent references to this text will use this edition, with the page numbers indicated in parenthesis.
[53] See, for instance, Beth Dickson, 'Class and Being in the Novels of William McIlvanney', in *The Scottish Novel Since the Seventies*, ed.by Gavin Wallace and Randall Stevenson (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993), pp. 54-70 (p. 54).

terrorizing the elderly spinster Miss Gilfillan by conspicuously peering through her window. Angrily rejecting his wife Jenny's protests that there are already 'men oot there' who will deal with the deviant incomer, Tam makes his way onto the street. At first, he explains the situation and asks the man to stop, but the Peeping Tom's dismissive response precipitates a violent reaction from Tam:

> 'Here, sur,' Tam said. The mode of address was ominous, habitual with him when he was roused. It was the formality of a duelling challenge [...]
> 'That's a maiden lady in there, sur. An auld budy. Ye'll be frichtenin' her tae daith wi' this cairry-oan!' Tam remained a good yard away, not wishing to provoke the big man. His voice was perfectly pleasant. 'Noo, wid ye no' be better tae go oan tae where ye're goin'.'
> He looked Tam over as if measuring him for a coffin.
> 'Bogger off, little man. Before I fockin' fall on yese.'
> Something happened instantly to the situation which was almost audible, like a safety catch unclicking [...] He didn't stop. The man had subsided against the wall, blood spattering from his nose and cuts on his face, and still Tam punched, following his head as it slithered to the ground, rabid with anger. (*D*, 75-77)

There are a number of striking things about this scene. Although Jenny objects to Tam's intervention, she is still working under the assumption that the men of the street should deal with the pervert. Tam is surprisingly civil, reserved even, in his first engagement with the stranger. Confirming that 'High Street was very strong on rights', he seems to be operating according to an unofficial but nevertheless formalized code of conduct, as he gives the man a chance to withdraw his offence. This demonstration of civility and patience is clearly at odds with the gratuitous level of violence that Tam then goes on to deal out, almost involuntarily.

The violence and Tam's unreconstructed masculinity is not presented as being aberrant but natural to his traditional community. Indeed, in spite of Tam's excessive violence, which he only stops when Jenny screams at him, she still

bandages his hands and lovingly consoles him in the aftermath of the fight. What is more, striking a chord with Laidlaw's description of his city as 'a place so kind it would batter cruelty into the ground', the genteel Miss Gilfillan formally thanks Tam for his involvement: 'Mr Docherty. I should like to take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks for your kindness in coming to my aid the other evening' (*D*, 79). As K. M. Newton argues, it is only from 'a conventional middle-class perspective' that the construction of a masculinity dominated by violence and fighting in *Docherty* can be 'condemned as a form of atavistic behavior'. He proposes instead that the violence in the novel is 'inseparable from an ethic of honor that one finds embodied in Norse Sagas, Arthurian legends, and traditional western movies of the John Ford type. In this working-class society to be a "man" is very important'.[54] The specific historical, geographical and social setting of *Docherty* means that it is appropriate to read the novel's treatment of violence and masculinity in this way. To do otherwise risks retrospectively imposing an alien ideology on the pre-war working-class community represented in *Docherty*.

The relationship between violence and an ethic of honour, a feature of the kinds of organic society represented in the genres that Newton lists, is accordingly far more compromised in McIlvanney's novels which have a more contemporary setting, particularly the Laidlaw novels and *The Big Man*. The relation is compromised because a system of shared values and assumptions can no longer be taken for granted in the societies depicted in these later novels, which have since been corrupted by bourgeois individualism, especially throughout the Thatcher era.

[54] K. M. Newton, 'William McIlvanney's *Docherty*: Last of the Old or Precursor of the New?', *Studies in Scottish Literature*, 32 (2001), 101-116 (p. 106).

The Big Man's protagonist Dan Scoular is an ordinary, decent working-class man whose physical prowess and quiet good nature are falsely mythologized by his community. An ex-miner, he is drawn into the world of illegal bare-knuckle boxing in order to provide for his family during a debilitating phase of unemployment. The novel is reminiscent of Walter Hill's *Hard Times* (1975) about a laconic drifter likewise forced into bare-knuckle boxing in Louisiana during the Great Depression. In *The Big Man*, Dan is hired by Glaswegian underworld boss Matt Mason, who first appeared in *Laidlaw*, to fight former boxing champion Cutty Dawson, a similarly out-of-luck but generally decent character. The boxing match is a brutal spectacle organised by Mason and a rival gangland boss to settle an old score, and it is implemented by a further entourage of small-time crooks such as the faintly Runyonese character Fast Frankie White.

With their strict hierarchical structure and participation in a competitive market, the novel's ensemble of career criminals comprises an underworld which replicates the key characteristics of capitalist enterprise. Horsley argues that this is common feature of American gangster fiction: 'the gangster serves both as a figure admirable for his toughness and energy, defying an unjust system, and, looked at from another angle, as a parallel in his activities to the criminality of supposedly honest society'.[55] This parallel is central to the violence in *The Big Man*. The physical violence that Dan and Cutty commit against one another is symbolic of the more diffuse forms of violence enacted by the structures of capitalist society. Resonating with Johnnie Byrne's parallel between his illegal money-lending racket and capitalism in *The Hard Man*, McIlvanney points out that 'The chance to fulfil

[55] Lee Horsley, *The Noir Thriller* (Hampshire: Palgrave, 2001), pp. 46-47.

yourself in a capitalist society depends upon the right to do so at the expense of other people'.[56] Ian Spring's comments on the figure of the Scottish hard man are thus particularly appropriate to *The Big Man*, and indeed much of McIlvanney's fiction:

> The Hard Man mythology is, of course, a particularly potent form of inferiorist discourse in which the characteristics of the peripheral culture are not exactly the opposite of the core culture, but instead a carefully delineated perversion of them. The Hard Man may be a 'winner' in the sense of exhibiting and benefiting from the supposedly progressive characteristics that typify western capitalist culture, but his victory is really Pyrrhic – enacted on a stage that is only a netherland of the real world, condemned by oppression to remain apart from it.[57]

Reading the Laidlaw novels alongside *The Big Man* and *Docherty*, then, is revealing. Although *Docherty* does acknowledge that the problems of capitalism and bourgeois individualism existed before the First World War, it mostly celebrates the shared values and assumptions of its pre-war working-class society, however problematic such values might now seem, especially in terms of gender. *The Big Man* and the Laidlaw novels, on the other hand, present a vision of a society that represents the debased and morally vacuous inheritance of this earlier age. Residual traces of the society in *Docherty* emerge in bastardized forms in *The Big Man*. The now exceedingly problematic notion of what it means to be a man, which, as Newton argues, is significant and meaningful to the society of *Docherty*, lingers behind the brutal bare-knuckle boxing match and the gangsterism in *The Big Man*, but here any connection with an ethic of honour is severely compromised. Dan's contradictory feelings during the fight reflect this confusion about violence, identity, and tradition:

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[56] Murray and Tait, 'Plato in a Boiler Suit: William McIlvanney', p. 147.
[57] Ian Spring, 'Image and Text: Fiction on Film', in *The Scottish Novel Since the Seventies*, ed. by Gavin Wallace and Randall Stevenson (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993), pp. 206-216 (p. 211).

> Trying to focus on the fragmentary images of Cutty that felt as if they were coming at him from every angle, Dan seemed to himself to be fighting all those working-class hardmen who had formed the pantheon of his youth, men who in thinking they defied the injustice of their lives had been acquiescing in it because they compounded the injustice by unloading their weakness on to someone else, making him carry it.[58]

The Laidlaw novels contain these same elements of Scottish hard man culture and gangsterism that *The Big Man* overtly uses as a metaphor for the violence and unfairness of capitalist society. Indeed, the Laidlaw novels can be seen as a subtler negotiation of this parallel. Furthermore, the central Glasgow that is presented in the novels is very much the fallen world of hard-boiled crime fiction, in which the absence of community and communal values is marked. As Anthony Hoefer recognises, hard-boiled crime fiction is characterized by both the 'progressive willingness (perhaps a compulsion) to confront the excesses of bourgeois life by writing about popular culture in a popular genre' and a more conservative 'nostalgia for an idealized expiring moral and social order'.[59] These twin characteristics are especially foregrounded in the 1970s by the ironic or self-conscious deployments of the hard-boiled myth in films such as *The Long Goodbye* and *Chinatown*, discussed earlier in this chapter.

When the Laidlaw novels are read in conjunction with the faintly mythic, historical community which begins to break down in *Docherty*, this feature of nostalgia seems particularly pertinent for McIlvanney's contribution to the crime

[58] William McIlvanney, *The Big Man* [1985] (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1985), p. 207. All subsequent references to this text will use this edition with the page number indicated in parenthesis.
[59] Anthony Hoefer, '"Like tumbleweed drifting across a vacant lot": The Mythic Landscape of Los Angeles in Chandler's *The Big Sleep* and the Coen Brothers' *The Big Lebowski*', *Clues*, 26.3 (2008), 42-55 (p. 43).

genre. The implied sense of nostalgia in the Laidlaw novels is not an uncomplicated yearning for an illusory golden age. Rather, Newton's distinction between McIlvanney and Kelman is an apt description of a similar distinction that can be made between *Docherty* and the Laidlaw novels: 'whereas McIlvanney depicts [working-class solidarity] as a presence in the past, Kelman's predominant concern is with its absence in the present'.[60] The Laidlaw novels are similarly concerned with this apparent absence. They suggest that, although the earlier kind of Scottish working-class society represented in *Docherty* had more than its fair share of considerable social problems, both internally and externally imposed, it also had some important characteristics and shared ideals from which the contemporary society represented in *Laidlaw* could benefit. McIlvanney's crime novels, then, engage with themes that are particularly resonant in both contemporary Scottish fiction and the American hard-boiled tradition: urban working-class life, masculinity, violence, community, capitalism, and existentialism.

Ian Rankin

Engaging with the same concerns as McIlvanney's fiction, Ian Rankin's Rebus novels (1987-present) provide essential primary material for analysis within the contexts of this chapter. Indeed, the only writer who could hope to refute Rankin's claim, cited earlier, that there is 'no particularly Scottish equivalent to Agatha Christie or Raymond Chandler', is Rankin himself. As Len Wanner puts it, 'Ian Rankin' is a byword for Scottish crime fiction.[61] In terms of book sales, he is not

[60] Newton, 'William McIlvanney's *Docherty*', p. 102.
[61] Len Wanner, *Dead Sharp*, p. 181.

only the most successful Scottish crime writer, but also one of the best-selling contemporary British writers working in any genre. As Plain points out, 'by 1998 Ian Rankin had become the most successful writer in Scotland, setting a new record by occupying 6 out of the top 10 places [including the top spot] in the Scottish Book Marketing Group's annual sales survey'.[62] Rankin's centrality to contemporary Scottish crime fiction is further demonstrated by the way that, as with Christie and Chandler in their respective sub-genres, other Scottish crime writers seem compelled to define their work against his, often involving a slight parodic dimension. His fiction is referenced, for instance, in Stuart MacBride's Aberdeen crime novel *Cold Granite* (2005):

> Desperate Doug was in a private room, guarded by a young PC reading a book. With a guilty jump he stuffed the Ian Rankin under his seat.
> 'It's OK, Constable,' said Logan. 'I won't tell anyone. Get us three coffees and you can go back to your tales of police derring-do.'[63]

Although it is obviously tongue-in-cheek, by making Rankin's fiction an imaginary construct within its own fictive world, MacBride's violent and disturbing police procedural advertises itself as having more privileged purchase on real life than the work of the self-proclaimed 'king of tartan noir'.[64] What is more, it is suggested that the constable is reading the novel as a 'guilty' pleasure, a piece of escapism from unglamorous real-life police-work. Logan's sardonic description of the Rebus series

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[62] Gill Plain, *Ian Rankin's 'Black and Blue': A Reader's Guide* (New York: Continuum, 2002), p. 19.
[63] Stuart MacBride, *Cold Granite* [2005] (London: HarperCollins, 2005), p. 447.
[64] This characterization of Rankin was originally attributed to American crime novelist James Ellroy as a cover quotation for *Black and Blue* (1997). However, Rankin reveals that he invented the term 'tartan noir' when he met Ellroy at a book signing in Nottingham. Ellroy, who was unfamiliar with Rankin's work, jokingly signed the book 'To the King of Tartan Noir'. Rankin mischievously went on to use it as a coverage quotation. See Len Wanner, *Dead Sharp*, p. 3.

as ‘tales of derring-do’ underscores this suggestion, being a conspicuously dated term for adventure stories of unambiguous, masculine bravery.

Similarly assimilating Rankin into its own structure but for very different purposes, Alexander McCall Smith’s *44 Scotland Street* (2005) features ‘Ian Rankin’ as a fictional character, rather incongruously first depicted, as Rebus’s nemesis Big Ger Cafferty often is, wallowing idly in a hot-tub. Smith’s composite novel elicits an alternative version of Rankin’s fiction from that presented in *Cold Granite*, when a ‘Morningside lady’ named Priscilla declares, ‘I don’t read his books personally – they’re a bit *noir* for me – but I suppose those stronger than I read them’.[65] The term ‘noir’ shoulders a weight of stylistic connotations, which will be explored in the second chapter of this thesis, but Smith’s character seems to be using it here simply to suggest that Rankin’s crime fiction is dark and gruesome. The two opposing characterizations of Rankin’s work found in *Cold Granite* and *44 Scotland Street*, then, indicate another reason why he is the central figure of Scottish crime fiction. His Rebus series combines an adherence to generic convention and a witty, accessible style, with enough darkness, violence, and uncertainty to maintain a consistent popular appeal. As with McIlvanney’s detective novels, it is the particular inflection that Rankin gives to the generic conventions, and the values that the Rebus novels negotiate, that make them a distinctively Scottish contribution to the crime genre.

The series spans from Detective Inspector John Rebus’s debut at the age of forty in *Knots & Crosses* to his retirement from the force at sixty in the most recent novel *Exit Music* (2007), which went ahead despite Fife MSP Helen Eadie’s appeal

[65] Alexander McCall Smith, *44 Scotland Street* [2005] (London: Abacus, 2005), pp. 230-231.

to the Minister for Justice, Cathy Jamieson, to extend the serving age of Scottish police detectives to sixty-five in order to delay the fictional detective's compulsory retirement.[66] The Rebus series, then, currently comprises seventeen novels, two collections of short stories, and three un-collected short stories, 'Tell Me Who to Kill' (2003), 'Atonement' (2005) and 'The Final Drop' (2010), published over a period of twenty-five years, constituting the lion's share of Rankin's literary output. Aside from the Rebus series, his work includes a coming-of-age novel called *The Flood* (1986), a conspiracy-theory novel *Westwind* (1990), and four espionage thrillers, *Watchman* (1988), *Witch Hunt* (1993), *Bleeding Hearts* (1994), and *Blood Hunt* (1995), the last three of which are published under the pseudonym 'Jack Harvey'. More recently, Rankin has written a libretto with Craig Armstrong, an Edinburgh heist novel called *Open Doors* (2008), a graphic novel called *Dark Entries* (2009), and he is also currently co-writing a film adaptation of James Hogg's *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824). In 2009, he started a new crime series featuring a tee-total, police complaints investigator called Malcolm Fox, which consists of two novels at present, *The Complaints* (2009) and *The Impossible Dead* (2011). His forthcoming novel *Standing in Another Man's Grave* (2012), however, intriguingly brings his two series together, being simultaneously the third Malcolm Fox novel and the eighteenth Rebus novel.

[66] 'Rebus Retirement Worries Real-Life Cops', *Daily Record*, 24 October 2007 <http://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/rebus-retirement-worries-real-life-cops-961112> [accessed 22 September 2012].

As Rankin points out, his Rebus series unfolds in 'a very definite real-time real world', with each novel set at approximately the same time as it is published.[67] It thus offers both a strong sense of continuity and the capacity for subtle development in character and setting between the novels. The series can be divided in three distinct phases in terms of character development and changes in form. Like the early examples of many series, the first four Rebus novels *Knots & Crosses*, *Hide & Seek* (1991), *Tooth & Nail* (1992), and *Strip Jack* (1992) as well as the first collection of short stories *A Good Hanging and Other Stories* (1992) are not entirely in keeping with the more familiar perceptions of the series. Though still a credible character, the Rebus of these first novels is not consistent with the more fully developed, definitive version of the character that later emerges. His tastes in music and literature, and his strong sense of Christianity here seem especially incongruous within the context of the series. The other main characters of the series who function as counterpoints for Rebus are notably absent. His nemesis, Big Ger Cafferty, is mentioned only once when he is unceremoniously introduced in *Tooth & Nail* as the 'boss of a thuggish protection and gaming racket'.[68] Rebus's sidekick, Detective Sergeant Siobhan Clarke, is not introduced until *The Black Book* (1993). The earlier novels also offer a sense of narrative closure which later examples from the series resolutely deny. The focalizing character fluctuates far more frequently in the early novels, accommodating the perspectives of several minor characters, whereas the novels from *Strip Jack* to *Dead Souls* (1999) are claustrophobically focalized almost

[67] Patricia Treble, 'The Macleans.ca Interview: Ian Rankin', *Macleans.ca* (2007) <http://www.macleans.ca/canada/features/article.jsp?content=20071019_141820_7300> [accessed 22 September 2012].
[68] Ian Rankin, *Tooth & Nail* [1992] (London: Orion, 1998), p. 115.

exclusively from Rebus's perspective, only very occasionally offering brief alternatives, such as the handful of pages narrated from Bible John's point of view in *Black and Blue* (1997).

By the publication of *The Black Book*, *Mortal Causes* (1994), *Let it Bleed* (1996), *Black and Blue*, *The Hanging Garden* (1998), and *Dead Souls*, both the series and the main character are instantly recognizable. Rebus's musical tastes now resemble those with which the character is now closely associated, and his literary tastes and religiosity are significantly downplayed. His personal problems are intensified, with his alcohol abuse becoming increasingly frequent, and his family, friends, and lovers drawn further and further into his dangerous cases. He, too, becomes an increasingly damaged character, with these novels best demonstrating Rankin's characterization of him as his own 'punching bag'.[69] During this part of the series, Siobhan becomes a central character. The role that Cafferty fulfils in the series takes on more significance, and he takes shape as Rebus's Moriarty-like gothic double. Even though Cafferty is incarcerated in Glasgow's Barlinnie prison from *The Black Book* until *Set in Darkness* (2000), Rebus mentions and visits him with surprising frequency, and he maintains his tight stranglehold over Edinburgh's underworld by proxy, through the slick machinations of his musteline right-hand-man, the Weasel.

Set in Darkness, the first Rebus novel published after the creation of the new Scottish parliament, heralded a new direction for the series with *The Falls* (2001), *Resurrection Men*, *Beggars Banquet* (2002), *A Question of Blood* (2003), *Fleshmarket Close*, *The Naming of the Dead* (2006), and *Exit Music* following in the

[69] Treble, 'The Macleans.ca Interview: Ian Rankin'.

same vein. The series exploits the nation's changing political landscape, becoming more overtly political in character during these final novels. By *Set in Darkness*, Cafferty is freed from prison, having falsified medical evidence that he has cancer, and is back in the driver's seat of his illegitimate Edinburgh businesses. This return of Cafferty, along with a murdered MSP and the discovery of an ancient skeleton on site of the new parliament, prompts Plain to observe that 'For Rankin in particular, devolution has meant business as usual'.[70] In conjunction with the seismic shift in Scotland's political circumstances, however, *Set in Darkness* also inaugurates significant changes in the series' form and scope, bringing in an unprecedented variety of different focalizing characters, with Siobhan in particular occupying almost as much narrative time as Rebus in some of the most recent novels.

The Rebus series could be discussed productively within any of the chapters in this thesis. There is a strong noir dimension to them, drawing on the traditions of American crime cinema, horror fiction, and Scottish gothic, a confluence of sources which aligns them with the texts examined in the second chapter. In the manner of the texts discussed in the third chapter, the series also mines a rich seam of low-key, self-reflexive, and distinctively Scottish humour throughout. Gently echoing the culturally English golden-age tradition that will be discussed in the fourth chapter, many of the Rebus novels function as traditional, well-plotted mysteries. In terms of setting, moreover, they occasionally offer up Edinburgh, like Miss Marple's village St. Mary Mead, as a genteel and unlikely place for murder. This chapter's exploration of the hard-boiled tradition, however, provides the most revealing

[70] Gill Plain, 'Concepts of Corruption: Crime Fiction and the Scottish "State"', in *The Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Literature*, ed. by Berthold Schoene (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007) pp. 132-140 (p. 135).

context for analysing the Rebus novels. Their depiction of urban working-class masculinity is nuanced and deeply ambivalent, bridging the sizeable gap between the masculinities found in the work of McIlvanney and Irvine Welsh. This chapter accordingly emphasizes the in-between qualities of Rankin's detective, reading his configuration of masculinity alongside the American hard-boiled tradition and, its predecessor, the frontier narrative.

Indeed, Horsley sums up the hard-boiled hero as 'a tough, independent, often solitary figure, a descendant of the frontier hero and cowboy but, as reimagined in the 1920s, a cynical city-dweller […] isolated and estranged, existing on the margins of society'.[71] Rebus certainly fulfils these conditions. In *The Naming of the Dead*, even Siobhan describes him as 'obsessed and sidelined; thrawn and mistrusted'.[72] Of the conditions that Horsley lists, it is the private eye's forerunner, the frontier hero, with which this chapter is initially concerned. It is well-established that hard-boiled crime fiction is an updated, urbanized version of the western. John Scaggs, for instance, posits 'the private eye as a quick-fisted urban cowboy'.[73] Further illustrating the proximity of the two forms, *Black Mask* magazine published its early hard-boiled crime narratives alongside pulp westerns.[74] It is notable, moreover, that Clint Eastwood barely changes his laconic acting style between his two most iconic roles, the 'Man with No Name' frontier hero of Sergio Leone's spaghetti westerns (1964-1966) and the hard-boiled, insubordinate police detective of *Dirty Harry*. Yet both are definitive performances of their respective genres. Siegel's *Coogan's Bluff*

[71] Lee Horsley, *The Noir Thriller* (Hampshire: Palgrave, 2001), p. 19, p. 23.
[72] Ian Rankin, *The Naming of the Dead* [2006] (London: Orion, 2006), p. 260. All subsequent references to this text will use this edition with the page number indicated in parenthesis.
[73] John Scaggs, *Crime Fiction* (Oxon: Routledge, 2005), p. 57.
[74] Horsley, *Twentieth-Century Crime Fiction*, p. 76.

(1968) provides the missing link between the two, with Eastwood as a deputy sheriff from Arizona, complete with revolver, ten-gallon Stetson, and pointed cowboy boots, but relocated to the urban wilderness of inner-city New York in pursuit of an escaped fugitive. The hard-boiled hero customarily demonstrates the same kind of rugged individualism as the frontier hero. Regulating barbarous urban envrionments, he exploits the same kind of social detachment, quiet masculine authority, and moral autonomy with which the cowboy negotiates the frontier. Bordwell and Kristen Thompson characterize the frontier hero as an ultimately divided character, patrolling various kinds of borders that are situated between oppositional forces: 'Quite early the central theme of the [western] became the conflict between civilized order and the lawless frontier […] At home in the wilderness but naturally inclined toward justice and kindness, the cowboy is often poised between savagery and civilization'.[75] The cowboy's physical navigation of the frontier, then, mirrors his liminal position between civilization and wilderness, order and lawlessness, and justice and corruption.

Although the cityscape of Rankin's crime fiction lacks a visual representation of border territory as immediately striking as the great western frontier, the series' urban environments are often presented in a similar way. Considering the housing-estates around Edinburgh in *Mortal Causes*, for instance, Rebus reflects: 'This was a frontier life, complete with marauding natives who

[75] David Bordwell and Kristen Thompson, *Film Art: An Introduction* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1997), p. 56.

wanted the intruders gone, border skirmishes, and wilderness experiences aplenty'.[76] Arguing that the frontier narrative is 'particularly resonant' in relation to *Black and Blue*, Plain proposes that the 'western imagery isn't simply a convenient shorthand for lawlessness. Rather it represents the tip of an iceberg, signalling the novel's concern with social exclusion, deprivation, and hopelessness'.[77] This argument is applicable across the series. Indeed, following in the tradition of McIlvanney's Laidlaw novels, Rankin's fiction is profoundly ambivalent, showing as much antipathy towards the values of civilization as it does towards criminality. Rebus also demonstrates the same kind of outsider status as the frontier hero, being unable to settle into domestic life: 'Summer weekends, appearing endless and unchangeable. Nowadays, Rebus hated them […] Monday mornings were his true release, a break from the sofa and the bar-stool, the supermarket and curry-house […] Without the job, he almost ceased to exist' (*NOTD*, 51).

Professionally, Rebus is a liminal figure. Directly contradicting his position as an agent of the law, he repeatedly breaks the rules and there are occasional incidents where his obsessive nature takes over. Scaggs points out a scene from *The Falls* which 'perfectly encapsulates Rebus's often vague, intuitive, and subjective investigative methods'.[78] Drunk and off-duty, Rebus visits the flat of missing student Philippa Balfour as part of his typically idiosyncratic investigative process. When Philippa's father, who happens to be visiting her flat, asks him why he is there,

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[76] Ian Rankin, *Mortal Causes* [1994], in Ian Rankin, *Rebus: The St. Leonard's Years* (London: Orion, 2001) p. 641. All subsequent references to this text will use this edition with the page number indicated in parenthesis.
[77] Gill Plain, *Ian Rankin's 'Black and Blue': A Reader's Guide* (New York: Continuum, 2002), pp. 40-43.
[78] Scaggs, *Crime Fiction*, p. 95.

Rebus's response does little to elucidate the process: 'He looked around. "Just wanted to … well, I suppose I ..." But he couldn't find the words'.[79] In *Let it Bleed*, his superior Superintendent 'Farmer' Watson tells him, 'I think you know damn well that these obsessions of yours end up damaging everyone around you, friend, foe and civilians alike […] As long as your own personal morality is satisfied, that's all that counts', and Rebus cannot help but agree with him.[80] The insubordinate police detective is very much a cliché of hard-boiled crime fiction, exemplified by Eastwood's character in *Dirty Harry*. This convention, though, is anticipated by private eye fiction. Horsley astutely observes that, in Hammett's *Red Harvest* (1929), the Continental Op 'is part of the Continental Detective Agency and must ultimately report to "the Old Man", who gives him "merry hell" – something an unconventional police detective is always likely to given by his superior officers'.[81]

The merry hell that Rebus receives from his superiors usually consists of being forcibly sidelined from the investigation, as in *The Hanging Garden*, *Let it Bleed*, and *The Naming of the Dead*, or suspended from the force, as in *The Falls* and *Exit Music*. In classic rogue-cop style, of course, Rebus continues working on whichever investigation he feels compelled to, doing so explicitly on his own terms. This convention of the police procedural is especially pronounced in the Rebus series, prompting Plain to observe that 'Rebus operates as a PI *within* the police force'.[82] This is a paradoxical position, since, as Charles Alva Hoyt points out, 'the

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[79] Ian Rankin, *The Falls* [2001] (London: Orion, 2001), p. 15-16. All subsequent references to this text will use this edition with the page number indicated in parenthesis.
[80] Ian Rankin, *Let it Bleed* [2005], in Ian Rankin, *Two Great Novels: 'Let it Bleed' and 'Black and Blue'* (London: Orion, 2005), p. 269. All subsequent references to this text will use this edition with the page number indicated in parenthesis.
[81] Horsley, *Twentieth-Century Crime Fiction*, p. 101.
[82] Gill Plain, 'Hard Nuts to Crack', p. 58.

basic charm of the private eye is that he is aggressively outside the law'.[83] The absurd extent of Rebus's maverick qualities, and the legal loop-holes they would raise, are amusingly foregrounded in the epilogue to *A Question of Blood* (2003), when the murderer's solicitor raises the sort of objections which would be applicable to any Rebus novel:

> Detective Inspector Rebus belongs to Derek Renshaw's family … a cousin to be precise. As a result of which, he should never have been let near the case […] A question of possible proceedings being taken against him in a murder case […] one does have to wonder at Lothian and Borders Police. I'm not sure that I've ever heard of an officer on suspension being able to move so freely around another ongoing enquiry.[84]

Indeed, as with most fictional detectives, Rebus's unorthodox investigative procedures would certainly render his evidence of little use for court purposes. What the scene does, however, is foreground the clash between institutional figure and outsider that Rebus embodies.

Rebus's image as an insubordinate cop is used most inventively in *Resurrection Men*. James Campbell's review of the novel points out that it is far more plot-driven than previous Rebus novels, which are more focused on character and setting: 'it is all plot; no twist goes without a counter-twist, and then a counter-counter-twist'.[85] The novel's complex plot, however, actually facilitates its engagement with the main character. *Resurrection Men* opens with Rebus

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[83] Charles Alva Hoyt, '*The Damned*: Good Intentions: The Tough Guy as Hero and Villain', in *Tough Guy Writers of the Thirties*, ed. by David Madden (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1968), pp. 224-230 (p. 225).
[84] Ian Rankin, *A Question of Blood* [2003] (London: Orion, 2003), pp. 359-360.
[85] James Campbell, 'An Inspector Falls' [A Review of *Resurrection Men*], *Guardian*, 26 January 2002 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2002/jan/26/crime.ianrankin> [accessed 22 September 2012].

undergoing retraining at the Scottish Police College in Tulliallan because he has apparently lost his temper and thrown a mug of tea at his superior Superintendent Gill Templer in response to her handling of a murder enquiry. The characterization of the training college explicitly evokes frontier imagery: 'Tulliallan was their last-chance saloon. They were here to atone, to be resurrected'.[86] Indeed, the group of fellow insubordinate police officers Rebus is placed with – Francis Gray, James 'Jazz' McCullough, Stu Sutherland, Tam Barclay, and Allan Ward – have nicknamed themselves 'The Wild Bunch' (*RM*, 5) in allusion to the aging outlaws from Sam Peckinpah's famously brutal 1969 western. This kind of frontier imagery abounds in the novel. The group of officers, coming from several different police regions of Scotland, are described as 'spokesmen for their tribes' (*RM*, 5) and Rebus later reflects that 'it wasn't so much a team thing, more something approaching a siege mentality' (*RM*, 207). At one point in the novel, moreover, he refers to Glasgow as 'the wild west' (*RM*, 121).

Here the frontier imagery is suggestive of the crossing of social thresholds and Rebus's position between violent, irreconcilable factions. It is not until nearly one hundred pages into *Resurrection Men* that it is revealed that Rebus is in fact operating undercover at Tulliallan. The tea incident was deliberately staged to give him the opportunity to investigate, from an inside position, several corrupt police officers suspected of murder and embezzlement. This effective narrative subterfuge is only possible because Rebus is, throughout the series, such an unpredictable, stubbornly defiant character. For Rebus to lose his temper in such a volatile way,

[86] Ian Rankin, *Resurrection Men* [2002] (London: Orion, 2002), p. 6. All subsequent references to this text will use this edition with the page number indicated in parenthesis.

alienating himself and risking his career, is entirely credible in light of previous instances. In *The Black Book*, for example, he impulsively buys an illegal handgun in order to pursue his own personal crusade for retribution. In *Dead Souls*, in a move he later comes to regret, Rebus rashly informs a tabloid newspaper of the whereabouts of the convicted paedophile Darren Rough in full knowledge that this action will inspire brutal, vigilante justice from the residents of the fictional Greenfield housing estate in which Rough lives.

Rebus's impulsiveness and often contradictory morality is exploited to its full potential in *Resurrection Men*, as his straddling of social, legal, and psychological thresholds is resourcefully brought into play. At Tulliallan, the members of 'The Wild Bunch' are put to work on a cold case, investigating the murder of Rico Lomax, as part of a team-building exercise. Interestingly, two of the names involved in this unsolved case, Rico and Diamond, are borrowed from the two main characters in W. R. Burnett's gangster novel *Little Caesar* (1929), evoking another American tradition of lawlessness. The case in question turns out to be one in which Rebus has had some inappropriate involvement:

> Rebus stared at [Jazz McCullough]. Could he really know? Here Rebus was, supposedly infiltrating the trio, and every move they made seemed calculated to undermine him. First Rico Lomax, now the Murrayfield rape. Because there was a connection between the two … and that connection was Rebus himself. No, not just Rebus … Rebus and Cafferty … and if the truth came out, Rebus's career would cease to be on the skids.
>
> It would be a car-wreck. (RM, 205-206)

By the end of the narrative, it transpires that Rebus inadvertently caused Rico's murder, having let slip to Cafferty that Rico had been concealing a criminal known

as ‘the manse rapist’. Rebus’s somewhat suspect intention in telling him about Rico was to bring about an unofficial and unlawful punishment of the manse rapist rather than Rico himself (*RM*, 469). Echoing the criminals’ response to the sexual murder in *Laidlaw*, however, Cafferty considers the manse rapist so reprehensible that he gets his thuggish hirelings to beat Rico to death just for concealing him. Rebus further discovers that the training college’s selection of this unsolved case is no coincidence and his superiors are in fact simultaneously investigating him. Rebus is trapped, then, between at least three different yet interconnecting criminal investigations. The reader is not privy to the nature of Rebus’s involvement in any of them. In this sense, *Resurrection Men* echoes Hammett’s novels *Red Harvest* and *The Glass Key* (1931) in which the central mystery seems to be the indeterminate loyalties and indecipherable intentions of the investigative character, rather than the culprit or method of the crime. Although Rankin’s novel is particularly plot-driven, the tortuous, labyrinthine narrative structure effectively brings out Rebus’s precarious position between criminal activity and the law, emphasizing his suspicion, alienation, and paranoia.

The character of Rebus echoes the tough-guy heroes of hard-boiled crime fiction, in terms of his pithy wisecracks, aggressive attitude, and acts of violence. In the epilogue of *The Naming of the Dead*, for instance, Rebus takes the day off work, pretending to be sick, and travels to London by train to mete out a violent revenge on Jacko, an English man who had falsely impersonated a police officer and wrongfully locked Rebus in jail for a night:

> Then his faced smashed into it as he was propelled from behind, through the door and into the stairwell, Rebus not giving him any sort of a chance. Grabbed him by the hair and pummelled the face into the grey concrete wall, smearing blood across it. A knee in the back and Jacko was on the ground, dazed and semiconscious. A rabbit punch to the neck and another punch to the jaw […] Jacko's whole body had gone limp. Rebus made sure he still had a pulse and his airways weren't blocked […] Over to [Jacko's] Porsche, where he scored one side if the bodywork with the ignition key before opening the driver's-side door. Slotted the key home and left the door open invitingly. (*NOTD*, 419)

The fragmentary sentences used here, whilst effectively suggesting speed of movement, also work to dissociate Rebus from his actions, since many of them describe the actions in isolation, making no reference to the character executing them. This mode of narration gives the impression that Rebus has become an obsessive and dehumanized figure, disconnected from his actions. Indeed, he is only grammatically connected with his consequences of his actions when he checks that he has not inadvertently killed Jacko. Rebus is fundamentally at odds with himself in this scene. As a police officer, his job is to uphold the law, yet he breaks it in a deliberate and particularly premeditative fashion with the end of pursuing a personal justice which he believes is unavailable from the law. This action resonates with Laidlaw's suggestion that the law is an inadequate substitute for justice.

Although Rebus's unwarranted violence is by no means an alien quality to the generic hard-boiled detective, the scene is problematic, offering little indication of how it is to be interpreted. It seems, on the one hand, celebratory of Rebus's violence, because it comes at the end of a novel in which his sense of justice is repeatedly thwarted, and in which he bears witness to large-scale social injustices that he can do little to alter. In his superiors' eyes, he is surplus to requirements for the G8 Summit at Gleneagles, despite the fact that 'Officers were being drafted in

from all over. Fifteen hundred were coming from London alone' (*NOTD*, 6). Given that he is sidelined, obstructed, and disenfranchised, then, Rebus's assault on Jacko seems to offer a form of small-scale consolatory justice that the law denies him. On the other hand, there is an unsettling quality about the episode, partly because Rebus calmly plans out the attack in advance and executes it, despite facing no further threat from Jacko. Compared to Docherty's almost ceremonious invitation to fight with the Peeping Tom, Rebus directly contravenes the Scottish hard man's ethic of honour by fighting unscrupulously, approaching the unsuspecting Jacko 'from behind' and 'not giving him any sort of a chance'. Indeed, the scene confirms Plain's argument, proposed before the publication of *The Naming of the Dead*, concerning Rebus's participation in constructions of masculinity:

> Rebus belongs to a category of masculinity that is fast becoming defunct. He is something of a dinosaur, constructed in the era when hard men had a value in society, when the predominant mode of Scottish masculinity was the working-class ideal of the independent artisan. This figure was a skilled worker and a hard worker, a man of few words and no frills […] Rebus, as an heroic artisan, must fight off the threats to his autonomy (and to the interests of justice and truth) represented by the marketplace man. That he is in this position, however, indicates that the mode of masculinity he represents – the Scottish hard man – is in crisis. It is no longer a dominant, but rather a nostalgic mode of being.[87]

Plain's use of the term 'nostalgic' relates to the kind of traditional masculinity found in *Docherty*. Docherty's violence and manliness are tied up with an ethic of honour, and inseparable from his community's shared values and assumptions. By the time of the Rebus novels, however, these communitarian values are no longer relevant, having been corrupted by individualism and corporatism. The Rebus series is deeply

[87] Plain, *Ian Rankin's 'Black and Blue'*, p. 53-55.

ambivalent about Rebus's traditional masculinity, sometimes knowingly presenting it as defunct and problematic, but occasionally celebrating the underdog, nativist values that it represents. Like Laidlaw, Rebus provides an important negotiation of Scottish masculinity, bridging the gap between heroic artisans like Docherty and the hyper-masculine angry males of Irvine Welsh's fiction, who will be discussed shortly. Rebus certainly takes pains to satisfy his need to see some form of justice carried out, however primitive, ineffectual and problematic that form may take. In this sense, Rankin's text clashes together contradictory images of Rebus. He is a physically powerful Scottish hard man who, like the hard-boiled investigator and the frontier hero before him, administers rough justice where society fails to do so, yet simultaneously an obsessive, frustrated individual, powerless in the face of social degeneration.

Irvine Welsh

Discussion of Irvine Welsh's contribution to the crime genre offers further strategies involved in the representation of urban working-class masculinity within Scottish fiction and the crime genre. Like McIlvanney, Welsh is not primarily known as a crime writer but his novels *Filth* (1998) and *Crime* (2008) can easily and productively be classified as works of crime fiction. As with McIlvanney's forays in the crime genre, these novels do not represent a departure from his oeuvre. Indeed, Welsh's work notoriously abounds in the essential stock character types of hard-boiled crime fiction: violent psychopaths, alcoholics, drug addicts, sexual deviants, opportunists, and callous narrators. His hyper-masculine character Francis Begbie,

from his most well-regarded novel *Trainspotting* (1993), its sequel *Porno* (2002), and its prequel *Skagboys* (2012), provides a remarkable addition to the Scottish hard man archetype:

> One ay the things thit concerned us maist wis the fact thit ye couldnae really relax in his company, especially if he'd hud a bevvy. Ah always felt thit a slight shift in the cunt's perception ay ye wid be sufficient tae change yir status fae great mate intae persecuted victim […] any overt irreverence took place within strictly defined limits. These boundaries were invisible tae outsiders, but you gained an intuitive feel for them. Even then the rules constantly changed wi the cunt's moods […]
> *Myth: Begbie's mates like him.*
> *Reality: They fear him* […]
> *Myth: Begbie backs up his mates.*
> *Reality: Begbie smashes fuck out oot ay innocent wee daft cunts whae accidentally spill your pint or bump into you.*[88]

Here, his friend Mark Renton's description is in some ways reminiscent of the description of the formidable hard man culture in *Docherty*, evoking a similar sense of the High Street's 'invisible network of barriers and rights-of-way'. However, whereas these barriers are natural to the society of *Docherty* and constitute a valued means of controlling a unjust way of life imposed upon the community, the illusory thresholds that govern Begbie's violence are capricious, and they are not backed up by any such shared values and assumptions. As Cairns Craig puts it, 'Begbie thrives on a sense of injustice that is entirely fictional'.[89] This corruption of what once represented a valuable resistance against social injustice has its parallels in the American hard-boiled tradition. It is especially pronounced, for example, in African-American appropriations of the mode. Begbie has a precedent, for instance, in the

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[88] Irvine Welsh, *Trainspotting* [1993] (London: Minerva, 1994), pp. 75-76, 82-83. All subsequent references to this text will use this edition with the page number indicated in parenthesis.
[89] Cairns Craig, *The Modern Scottish Novel: Narrative and the National Imagination* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), p. 55.

violent, angry character 'Mouse' from Walter Mosley's Easy Rawlins series (1990-2007), who might be justifiably termed an African-American hard man. Drawing on Thomas H. Nigel's definition of the 'bad Black man' stereotype as anyone who menaces the white status quo, Mary Young argues that 'Raymond "Mouse" Navrochet, uncompromising in his viciousness, is the epitome of this bad Black man. The reasons for his brutality are not readily apparent, but he blithfully [sic] enjoys his savagery'.[90] Mouse's anger may initially have had a foundation as a kind of defiance against structural racism and inequality, but his violence later replicates the injustices that it initially opposed.

In the context of post-industrial Scotland, Begbie similarly corrupts the communal values and the resistance to inequality that Docherty's masculinity represents. Instead, he conversely embodies the worst excesses of an unthinking and exploitative individualism. Like many of Welsh's characters, he is exaggerated and excessive but these qualities are deliberate, contributing to a valuable negotiation of the hard man paradigm. The character fluctuates between grim credibility and hilarious self-parody. Indeed, even in the midst of Stuart Cosgrove's extended lament about post-industrial Scotland's fetishization of poverty and failure, discussed in this thesis's introduction, he singled out Begbie as an exception: 'This is the stuff of *grand guignol* not social realism. Compared with the grunting Neanderthals and dreary victims that have populated ours [sic] screens across twenty

[90] Mary Young, 'Walter Mosley, Detective Fiction and Black Culture', *The Journal of Popular Culture*, 32 (1998), 141-150 (p. 147). See also Thomas H. Nigel, *From Folklore to Fiction: A Study of Folk Heroes and Rituals in the Black American Novel* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), p. 43.

years Begbie is a Rabelaisian character funny and frightening in equal measure'.[91] To gesture ahead to the topics discussed in third chapter of this thesis, it is the qualities of excess and carnivalesque involved in the character of Begbie that confidently provide Welsh's representation of the Scottish hard man with a crucial critical distance. The disparity between the myths and realities that Renton attributes to Begbie provides a particularly witty manifestation of this critical distance, since while the myths speak of a tight-knit brotherhood of working-class solidarity, the realities reveal an uncomfortable atmosphere of fear and uncontrollable aggression. As well as dissecting the figure of the urban Scottish hard man, *Trainspotting* also exhibits several further overlaps with the recurrent concerns of McIlvanney's fiction that have been extensively discussed above. Craig argues that *Trainspotting*'s cast of characters, however marginalized they might appear, conversely constitute 'the mirror image of the free market capitalism which they believe themselves to have refused', echoing the allegorical meanings generated by the bare-knuckle boxing and gangsterism in *The Big Man*. He also points out that *Trainspotting*'s use of language 'gestures to the lost community which dialect had represented in the Scottish tradition and which has now been corrupted into fearful individualism', a line of reasoning which has strong resonances with the depiction of community in *Docherty* and its absence in the Laidlaw novels.[92]

Where McIlvanney and, to some extent, Rankin deploy hard-bitten police detectives who represent ambivalent constructions of a responsible masculinity in

[91] Stuart Cosgrove, 'Innovation and Risk – How Scotland Survived the Tsunami', The Edinburgh Lectures, 16 February 2005 <http://download.edinburgh.gov.uk/lectures/8_Stuart_Cosgrove39s_transcript.doc> p. 4. [accessed 27 January 2010]

[92] Craig, *The Modern Scottish Novel*, p. 97.

their fiction, Welsh's novel *Filth* takes the opposite strategy of using an investigator who epitomizes the most un-heroic and irresponsible constructions of masculinity imaginable. Detective Sergeant Bruce Robertson, nominally an inversion of the mediaeval Scottish folk hero, is a vile and unsympathetic character, even by Welsh's infamous standards. He is a right-wing reactionary, misogynistic, homophobic, racist, fascist, belligerent, substance-abusing, misanthropic, and pathological Edinburgh police officer who, according to Peter Clandfield, 'reads like a savage caricature of Rankin's Rebus'.[93] In terms of fictional precursors, however, he more accurately reads like the demented progeny of characters like Begbie, Mike Hammer, the violent police detective Mark Dixon from Otto Preminger's *Where the Sidewalk Ends* (1950), 'Dirty Harry' Callaghan, and the anti-hero of Abel Ferrara's *Bad Lieutenant* (1992). Certainly, Robertson could hardly be further from a character such as McIlvanney's socially concerned, existential detective Laidlaw. In stark distinction to Laidlaw's formidable intelligence and self-lacerating doubts about his choice of profession, Robertson insists, without any sense of shame or self-consciousness, that 'the job is one in which it's dangerous to think too much'.[94]

Instead of attempting to overcome his sense that 'when you're in the job, you look out at life through a distorted lens' (*F*, 3), Robertson wholeheartedly embraces the twisted and limiting worldview that he attributes to his profession even when he presents it as a drawback: 'The big problem with being polis is that you can't help but see people as either potential criminals or potential victims. That way you feel

[93] Peter Clandfield, 'Putting the "Black" into "Tartan Noir"', in *Race and Religion in the Postcolonial British Detective Story*, ed. by Julie H. Kim (London: MacFarland & Company, 2005), pp. 211-238 (p. 215).
[94] Irvine Welsh, *Filth* [1998] (London: Vintage, 1999), p. 25. All subsequent references to this text will use this edition with the page number indicated in parenthesis.

either a loathing or a contempt for anyone who isn't like you, i.e.: polis' (*F*, 72-73). Robertson's classificatory schema, which relies on crude categories, allows little space for humanity. His attitude towards victims is worryingly identical to his attitude towards criminals. In this regard, Robertson is almost the binary opposite of Laidlaw. While Laidlaw assumes a common humanity between himself and even the most apparently debased criminals, Robertson works on the assumption that he must mentally dehumanize even the victims of crime in order to maintain his sense of self. Aaron Kelly argues that '*Filth* […] rewrites William McIlvanney's detective novels based upon his character Laidlaw who provides a decent, upstanding working-class figure involved in the maintenance of law and order'.[95] Kelly's argument perhaps does not sufficiently account for the way that McIlvanney presents Laidlaw's decency and humanity as being antithetical to his position as a police officer. Indeed, these qualities are only able to survive when he alienates himself from almost all the other police characters and the values for which they stand. However conspicuously different Laidlaw and Robertson might be, there is a similar meaning generated by the two authors' creations. It is certainly striking to read the characters alongside one another and to read them in the context of the hard-boiled mode's ambivalent representations of masculinity. Kelly points out that Welsh's novel does not turn the hard-boiled tradition on its head but merely exaggerates the more problematic aspects of it:

> [I]t is not so much the case that *Filth* corrupts a tradition in which the detective is enduringly benevolent and secure in his empowered masculine and authorised

[95] Aaron Kelly, *Irvine Welsh* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), p. 153.

> identity regulating the rule of law. Rather, Welsh supersaturates or overdetermines the formative ambivalences of the hardboiled form and its insecurities.[96]

Filth, then, is as much of a commentary on its fictional precursors as *Laidlaw*. Like McIlvanney's novel, moreover, *Filth* subverts aspects of the crime genre in ways that are distinctively Scottish.

In the novel, Robertson is called upon to investigate the murder of a black Ghanaian journalist called Efan Wurie, who is visiting Edinburgh from London where his father is an ambassador. Robertson unashamedly admits, however, in his hyperbolically lurid narration that he is more concerned about the prospect of promotion and his winter week's holiday in Amsterdam than he is about 'the topped coon, this Efan Wurie (he's an Effen Worry tae me awright)' (*F*, 228). At times, the novel delights in Robertson's sensationalist, vulgar, and hypocritical lines of thought:

> I'm thinking to myself that a couple of neds in this city have topped this coon who's no business, as far as I can see, being here in the first place, so, fuck it. Who gives a toss? The answer is me. This reorganisation post comes up soon. I want that job, so I'm going to ferret out that murdering schemie bastard who topped our innocent coloured cousin. It's called, in a word, professionalism, and I'm a total fucking pro, something that the spastics around here wouldn't understand. Same rules apply in each and every case. (*F*, 75)

The reasons that Robertson is not a 'total fucking pro' go well beyond his severe prejudice and incompetence, however. He commits serious crimes that exceed the expected transgressions of procedure that fictional hard-boiled cops habitually indulge. When wasting time and trying to avoid being seconded onto the murder

[96] Kelly, *Irvine Welsh*, p. 154.

enquiry, Robertson and his colleague Ray Lennox, who becomes the protagonist for Welsh's later novel *Crime*, attend an elderly lady's house to take details of a house-breaking. Robertson furtively steals a paperweight that he assumes to be valuable and the officers deliberately intimidate and confuse the lady into thinking that it had been taken during the original theft (*F*, 9-16). His gross abuses of his power go even further later in the novel. Echoing *Bad Lieutenant*, he forces an underage girl, a girlfriend of his informant, to perform fellatio on him in exchange for not pressing charges against her for possession of ecstasy. As they leave the flat, he engages in one final sickening exchange with her boyfriend: 'Ye want tae teach her how tae gie a fuckin decent blow job, I laugh, pointing through to the room and shaking my head in a mixture of laughter and disgust as we depart' (*F*, 95). Robertson also enjoys indulging in horrific mind-games. At one point, he makes sexually threatening anonymous phone calls to his best friend's wife, agrees to carry out an unofficial investigation on her behalf, and then frames his friend (*C*, 96-104).

Robertson's professed hatred of Edinburgh's underclass, evident in his intention to frame 'a couple of neds' or 'a schemie bastard' for the murder, is a notable departure from contemporary Scottish crime fiction's customary representation of urban working-class masculinity. A significant proportion of fictional Scottish detectives are acutely aware of the inequality in their society and sympathetic to those affected by social injustice. Robertson, on the other hand, defends 'justifiable inequality' (*F*, 78) and see life as 'one big competition' (*F*, 195), both of which are resonant with the tenets of Thatcherism. He is eventually revealed, however, to have come from a working-class background having been brought up in

a mining town, in which the miners 'stuck together and were strong and solid' (*F*, 261). This disclosure is not divulged by Robertson himself. As the novel goes on and Robertson's psychological disintegration escalates, an increasingly articulate tapeworm in his stomach eats through his narration, revealing memories that he has repressed, which further complicate his aggressive masculinity. Such fantastical interventions and typographical experimentation of this kind have their Scottish precursors in the innovative work of Alasdair Gray. At one point, Robertson suggestively describes the tapeworm as 'twisting and growing, biding its time, like an Arthur Scargill in the healthy body politic of eighties Britain, the enemy within' (*F*, 171). Berthold Schoene points out that 'Welsh contrives a striking parallel between Margaret Thatcher's treatment of Arthur Scargill and Scotland's attitude to homosexuals and the English' in the passage in which Robertson describes his allegedly gay colleague Peter Inglis: 'The worm called Inglis is being flushed out the system; outed and routed, before further infestation can take hold' (*F*, 136).[97] It is Robertson's tapeworm-come-psychoanalyst, then, who reveals his working-class background:

> *So you came from a mining town and a mining family. You even went down the pit when you left school. Yet when the police lined up against them to enforce the new anti-union laws on behalf of the state, and break the resistance of the mine workers picketing against the closures, you were not on the side of the mineworkers. You were on the other side. Power was everything.* (*F*, 261)

[97] Berthold Schoene, 'Nervous Men, Mobile Nation: Masculinity and Psychopathology in Irvine Welsh's *Filth* and *Glue*', in *Scotland in Theory: Reflections on Culture and Literature*, ed. by Eleanor Bell and Gavin Miller (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2004), pp. 121-145 (p. 136).

Robertson's life story can be read allegorically in parallel to the shifts in Scotland's social and political circumstances. He is brought up in a setting that is emblematic of traditional working-class Scottish communities with their shared values, assumptions, and conventional constructions of masculinity. He becomes corrupted by a power-hungry individualism which evokes the rhetoric of Thatcherism, and problematically retains the more aggressive and exclusionary aspects of the traditional constructions of masculinity from his working-class background. All of these factors herald his own self-destruction at the end of the novel.

Intermittently, throughout the narrative, the tapeworm goes on to fill in darker details of Robertson's upbringing: his mother was raped and he is the biological son of a multiple rapist known in the media as 'The Beast' (*F*, 380-382), he suffered terrible abuse at the hands of his father (*C*, 315-316), he accidentally caused his younger brother's death (*F*, 353-354), and he also accidentally caused the death of his first girlfriend, a disabled girl named Rhona (*F*, 369-373). Welsh says that he intended such details to help explain why Robertson has turned out the way he has: 'The challenge was to try and write a character that represented everything that I detest in a way, and then to try and empathise with him'.[98] For Neil Cooper, as well as several other critics, the revelations about Robertson's upbringing that introduce an element of sympathy with the character actually serve to weaken the transgressive potential of Welsh's novel but do not ultimately impede its bleak worldview:

[98] Wendy Cavenett, 'A star is bored; Celebrity means nothing to Irvine Welsh. And the world stinks. And his new book could be his last' [an interview with Irvine Welsh], *Independent*, 11 July 1998, p.20.

> For all Welsh [believes himself] to be pushing boundaries, this is an old-fashioned politically correct piece that points the finger at today's bogeyman figure, only to excuse him care of a tortured childhood. Whether piggy in the middle or the worm that turned, though, *Filth* never flinches from the ugly truth.[99]

The main problem with these emotionally charged episodes from Robertson's past is that they are ham-fistedly executed. *Filth* on the whole is a compelling discourse on the nature of authority, power, and politically-incorrect rhetoric, fluctuating between horror and black humour, and inventively exploiting the populist structures of the hard-boiled crime novel. Its inclusion of these excessively bleak episodes for an effect of pathos, however, seems both perfunctory and at cross-purposes with the overall project. The final, almost inevitable, revelation of the novel, narrated by Robertson himself this time, is that he committed the murder he is supposed to be investigating. He admits that his suspicion that Efan Wurie was the man with whom his estranged wife has been unfaithful is tenuously based solely on his race: 'That was all I knew about him: he was black and she said she loved him […] We just had to finish him, we didn't know whether or not it was the guy Carole was with' (*F*, 390). Finally, that *Filth* ends with Robertson committing suicide means, moreover, that he fulfils a trio of contradictory roles in the novel: murderer, investigator, and executioner.

Welsh's more recent crime novel *Crime*, the title of which both demands an instant generic identification and simultaneously undermines it, takes Robertson's sidekick Detective Sergeant Ray Lennox as its protagonist.*Crime* is less carnivalesque than *Filth*. Compared to Robertson, Lennox represents something of a retreat to a more traditional hard-boiled protagonist. At most, his motives sometimes

[99] Neil Cooper, 'Filth', *Times*, 21 September 1999, p. 44.

seem uncomfortably vigilante and his obsessions render him a problematic hero, but these characteristics do not mark him out from his hard-boiled precursors. The novel uses a dual-time structure. It shifts between episodes from Lennox's recent past in which he investigates a child sex murder in Edinburgh, which are narrated using a second-person narrative voice, and episodes in which Lennox, on holiday in Miami, finds himself drawn into saving a sexually-abused ten-year-old American girl named Tianna from a ring of dangerous paedophiles. The earlier case continually intrudes on the novel's present since Lennox's psyche is bombarded with unsettling memories. His failure to crack the earlier case in time to save Edinburgh schoolgirl Britney Hamil provides his obsessive quest to save Tianna at all costs with a touch of credibility. It is revealed near the end of the novel, moreover, that Lennox and his childhood friend Les Brodie were sexually abused by three adult male strangers in a dark tunnel when they were young teenagers.[100] The disturbing scene, which is described rather unemotionally, explains Lennox's obsession with sex offenders and his reason for joining the police force:

> *Sex offenders: they have to be stopped*. It's why he's a cop, the unambiguous, unerring certainty of that particular crusade. Nonces made being a cop real: a workable and justifiable life. This time it isn't about enforcing ruinous, antiquated laws, or protecting the property of the rich. It really does become the straightforward battle between good and evil, as opposed to that mundane norm of trying to stem the consequences of poverty, boredom, stupidity and greed. (*C*, 142)
>
> The system was played solely for the leverage to get to them, the *real* villains. This power was craved because he'd declared war on paedophiles. Never a policeman, Ray Lennox is a beast hunter and now that he has their scent he's compelled to take this as far as he can. (*C*, 301)

[100] Irvine Welsh, *Crime* [2008] (London: Random House, 2008), pp. 282-288. All subsequent references to this text will use this edition with the page number indicated in parenthesis.

Some of Lennox's views about the responsibilities of the police in the former quotation echo those of Laidlaw, in the sense that both characters are suspicious about the ideological assumptions of the law. Yet it is inconceivable that Laidlaw would agree with Lennox's insistence that police-work could ever boil down to a 'straightforward battle between good and evil': this reductive and over-simplistic view of criminals, even for only one particularly unsettling kind of criminal, would constitute an example of 'false monstrosity' as far as Laidlaw is concerned. Perhaps a more appropriate comparison, especially with regard to the more sensationalist latter quotation, would be with the rugged individualist hero Lieutenant John Hartigan, a renegade cop from Frank Miller's hyper-noir comic series *Sin City* (1991-2000). Hartigan literally occupies a black and white moral world, and is similarly called upon to save a young girl from a caricature of a sadistic paedophile, only for the girl to fall in love with him as she grows into adulthood.

The use of an off-duty Scottish police officer conducting an unofficial investigation in Miami brings issues of transnationalism to the surface. Indeed, in the novel's first analepsis back to the Edinburgh child sex murder case, Lennox reflects on how certain aspects of the crime do not seem authentically Scottish or British:

> Nobody fitted the bill. It seemed an American-style crime, or rather the kind of crime of US fiction, as you supposed that real American crimes were like British ones. But it was culturally American: a lone drifter, a predator, not driving across long and lonely interstate freeways over a vast continent, but shuffling along in a white van through crowded, nosy Britain. (*C*, 46)

Having a Scottish character reflect on the fact that he seems to be participating in a 'culturally American' piece of crime fiction playfully foregrounds the transatlantic

exchange involved in the novel's use of genre and setting. In the latter part of the novel, *Crime* also subtly evokes another key literary source beyond the crime genre. Depicting a European adult male taking a disturbingly sexually-precocious, prepubescent, all-American girl on a road trip from the Atlantic Ocean to the Gulf of Mexico, the content of *Crime* inevitably echoes that of Vladmir Nabokov's novel *Lolita* (1955). As in Nabokov's novel, Welsh's protagonist is making his way through a geographical territory that is culturally alien to him, reacting with bewilderment and sometimes disgust at the Americana he encounters, but it is simultaneously a world with which the young girl who accompanies him is very familiar. This intertextual association is especially the case in the scene where Lennox and Tianna are forced to spend the night in a seedy motel together and she twice comes through to his room and attempts to sleep with him, playing out Humbert Humbert's paedophilic fantasy that it was Lolita who seduced him. As Neel Mukherjee says, of that particular scene:

> As if to buy more edgy-cred for his hero and 'shades of grey' ambivalence for his own writing, Welsh has Lennox sexually tempted by Tianna and has him conquer the moment. It is such a risibly unconvincing piece of staging – laboured, extraneous, and with such a palpable design on readers – that it serves only to emphasise the black-and white polarisations of Welsh's parodic, unidimensional world.[101]

While *Lolita* uses the sexual interactions between an adult European male and a pubescent American girl to ironize the clash between Old World and New World sensibilities, then, *Crime* has no such irony or depth. Its deployment of the

[101] Neel Mukherjee, 'Book Review: *Crime*, by Irvine Welsh', *Scotsman*, 22 June 2008 <http://living.scotsman.com/books/Book-review-Crime-by-Irvine.4210914.jp> [accessed 22 September 2012].

conventions of a 'culturally American' form of crime fiction offers little analysis of transatlantic relations, instead problematically indulging in the moral righteousness of the hard-boiled mode.

It is the figure of the cynical middle-aged policeman that dominates recent Scottish crime fiction's representation of urban working-class masculinity. This trend is presumably partly because the private investigator of the American hard-boiled tradition, a figure whom most of these characters seem designed to evoke for a variety of purposes, would stretch the limits of plausibility if used in serious crime fiction set in post-industrial Scotland. As well as maintaining a veneer of realism, however, the use of police officers as protagonists also allows for negotiations of the specific cultural resonances of the police force in working-class Scotland. This is only one example of how the crime fiction of William McIlvanney, Ian Rankin, and Irvine Welsh straddles an internationally Americanized crime genre in a distinctively Scottish way. These writers present complex constructions of urban working-class masculinity which are scaffolded by the specificities of Scotland's changing socio-economic circumstances. McIlvanney's Laidlaw novels demonstrate the profound ambivalences involved in the traditional visions of industrial masculinity in the West of Scotland, obliquely relating these images to those of the American hard-boiled mode. Rankin's Rebus series begins by engaging in a similar project, though complicating it with the very different cultural connotations engendered by its Edinburgh setting, and using the wider scope allowed by the length of the series to explore additional Scottish resonances in the crime genre. Welsh's distinctive forays into the sphere of crime fiction use provocative aesthetic strategies to confront

further tensions in the representation of urban working-class masculinity. Transcending this potentially limiting sphere, the following chapter turns to the gothic and noir flavours of contemporary Scottish crime fiction. Re-engaging with Scotland's pre-industrial past, these variants provide a less masculinist approach to the genre.

2. Set in Darkness: Gothic and Noir in the Work of Iain Banks and Louise Welsh

> But in those moments of blackness you stood there, as though you yourself were made of stone like the stunted, buried buildings around you, and for all your educated cynicism, for all your late-twentieth-century materialist Western maleness and your fierce despisal of all things superstitious, you felt a touch of true and absolute terror, a consummately feral dread of the dark; a fear rooted back somewhere before your species had truly become human and came to know itself, and in that primaeval mirror of the soul, that shaft of self-conscious understanding which sounded both the depths of your collective history and your own individual being, you glimpsed – during that extended, petrified moment – something that was you and was not you, was a threat and not a threat, an enemy and not an enemy, but possessed of a final, expediently functional indifference more horrifying than evil.[1]

In the final chapter of Iain Banks's noir thriller *Complicity* (1993), the protagonist Cameron Colley recalls visiting the shadowy underground vaults of Mary King's Close. Now a lucrative tourist attraction, this mediaeval street, preserved deep underneath the City Chambers in Edinburgh's Old Town, remains subject to supernatural and historical myths. Accounts of ghostly activity, including sightings of a spectral headless black dog, circulate alongside a notorious legend about the poor plague-stricken inhabitants of the tenements being callously walled up and left to die by the local council in the seventeenth century. This Jekyll-and-Hyde myth of unspeakable social injustice buried at the heart of polite Enlightenment Edinburgh, and literally providing its foundations, is, quite simply, not true. James Gilhooley's *Directory of Edinburgh in 1752* (1988) reveals that large numbers of people, particularly from the city's professional ranks, were still living in Mary King's Close

[1] Iain Banks, *Complicity* [1993] (London: Abacus, 1993), p. 310. All subsequent references to this text will use this edition and the page numbers will be indicated in parenthesis.

during the eighteenth century, which would be impossible were the legend accurate.[2] If it had been so plague-infected and walled in, the famous close would either have never been lived in again, or demolished. The legend, however, is nevertheless perpetuated in Edinburgh guidebooks and fiction, and Mary King's Close is a popular tourist attraction, supposedly providing visitors with a tangible link to Scotland's barbaric past. The narrator of *Complicity* recounts it at the start of the chapter, for example, though he curiously pushes the legend back to the sixteenth century (*C*, 309). This specific distortion of history is notably repeated without qualification by Victor Sage in an essay about Banks.[3] The legend of Mary King's Close also appears in part at the beginning of Ian Rankin's *Mortal Causes* (1993), in which a victim of sectarian violence is found hanging on a meat hook in the flesher's in the historic street.[4] This kind of intermingling of history and fiction adds a further dimension to the gothic content of the remarkable tangent that occurs at this juncture in *Complicity*. During Colley's visit, his childhood friend Andy Gould plays a practical joke in which he arranges for the caretaker to switch the lights out while they are down there, plunging them into 'a darkness more complete and final than anything you had ever known before' (*C*, 310), which leads to the remarkable passage cited above.

The passage helpfully introduces the main themes of this chapter. It expresses a profound gothic anxiety, invoking a remote and barbaric past, and

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[2] J. Gilhooley, *A Directory of Edinburgh in 1752* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1988), pp. 3-56.
[3] Victor Sage, 'The Politics of Petrifaction: Culture, Religion, History in the fiction of Iain Banks and John Banville', in *Gothic: Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies, Volume IV: Twentieth Century Gothic: Our Monsters, Our Pets*, ed. by Fred Botting and Dale Townshend (Routledge: London, 2004), pp. 312-329 (p. 313).
[4] Ian Rankin, *Mortal Causes* [1994], in Ian Rankin, *Rebus: The St Leonard's Years* (London: Orion, 2001), pp. 459-691 (p. 468).

positing a complex understanding of the human psyche that involves deeply conflicting impulses and the residual manifestations of a Jungian collective unconscious surviving from this pre-human past. Darkness, a motif central to both gothic and noir, is also incisively explored here. In an argument particularly applicable to this passage from *Complicity*, Fred Botting discusses the wider ramifications of gothic fiction's dark settings:

> Darkness, metaphorically, threatened the light of reason with what it did not know. Gloom cast perceptions of formal order and unified design into obscurity; its uncertainty generated both a sense of mystery and passions and emotions alien to reason. Night gave free reign to imagination's unnatural and marvellous creatures, while ruins testified to a temporality that exceeded rational understanding and human finitude.[5]

The symbolic darkness of gothic fiction, then, has as much to do with Enlightenment values and modern civilization's sense of itself as it does with the so-called dark ages that suddenly become defined against these modern values. Indeed, there are various oblique allusions to *Heart of Darkness* (1899) in the chapter from *Complicity* in which the scene, cited earlier, takes place. As these allusions indicate, the gothic anxiety in the novelis filtered through and intensified by contexts of modernity. This gothic anxiety gestures towards the dark alter egos of rationalism, Enlightenment, progress, and civilization, as well as foregrounding the dehumanizing effects of capitalism and corporate globalization. The use of a specific Scottish relic that is suggestive, albeit rather misleadingly, of uncanny supernatural activity, social injustice, and the interplay of past and present, moreover, gives further resonance to this modern variant of gothic anxiety in a Scottish context. Even

[5] Fred Botting, *Gothic* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 32.

as Scottish fiction begins to re-engage with its pre-industrial past, then, the strong socio-political content of the more recent cultural traditions discussed in this thesis's first chapter does not lose its sway. Taking a parallel approach to that used by the first chapter, this chapter analyses the particular inflections that the gothic and noir modes are given in contemporary Scottish crime fiction, arguing that they interact meaningfully with the configurations of gothic and noir that emerge in more mainstream or literary examples of recent Scottish fiction. This chapter will establish the significance of the various cultural modes involved and the relationships between them, before going on to analyse examples of contemporary Scottish crime fiction in light of these contexts.

Engaging with the gothic seems inevitable in a thesis that is largely devoted to exploring contemporary Scottish crime fiction's evocation of culturally American modes of the genre. The gothic is at the heart of many intricate connections between Scottish fiction, American fiction, and the crime genre. The origins of crime fiction in both Britain and America are intertwined with varieties of the gothic. Reputed to have initiated the detective genre, Edgar Allan Poe's short story 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue' (1841), for instance, is by no means a departure from his largely gothic oeuvre. As much as the narrator emphasizes the rational and analytical underpinning of the narrative, the story is steeped in gothic effects.[6] The British sensation novels of the 1860s and 1870s, such as those by Wilkie Collins, likewise represent a stepping-stone between gothic forms and crime fiction. Throughout the twentieth century, gothic fiction and the crime genre continue to share many common tropes:

[6] Edgar Allan Poe, 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue' [1841], in *The Collected Works of Edgar Allan Poe* (London: Wordsworth, 2009), pp. 2-26.

darkness, fear, sin, evil, mystery, guilt, revenge, secrets, mutilation of the body, madness, the double motif, and the split psyche paradigm. Regarding these last two tropes, Lee Horsley points out:

> The noir thriller is very often, like both *Frankenstein* and *Jekyll and Hyde*, a fantasy of duality, and *Jekyll and Hyde*, in particular, is a form of doppelgänger narrative rewritten countless times in the literary noir of the twentieth century. An apparently respectable protagonist's dark side surfaces, cannot be controlled, commits murders and brings ruin and destruction. Other elements in *Jekyll and Hyde* – sinister locations, darkness and decay, the fragmentary narrative, the suggestions of psychological monstrosity and regression to barbarity – are also familiar ingredients of the noir thriller.[7]

Horsley's example of Robert Louis Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886) is particularly revealing in this context, being a text that is an unambiguous example of gothic fiction, a text that is frequently claimed as a Scottish novel, and a text which has much in common with various kinds of modern crime fiction. Its main Scottish predecessor, *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824) by James Hogg, embodies a similar confluence of generic and national associations.

Although the crime genre did not exist as a market phenomenon in the nineteenth century in the way that it did in the twentieth century, these gothic texts by Hogg and Stevenson are key texts in a literary tradition that is continually being resurrected in Scottish fiction throughout the last two centuries, by a wide range of Scottish authors such as Muriel Spark and Alasdair Gray. *Justified Sinner* and *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* therefore constitute a necessary context in which to understand certain aspects of contemporary Scottish crime fiction. Indeed, many recent Scottish

[7] Lee Horsley, *The Noir Thriller* (Hampshire: Palgrave, 2001), p. 230.

crime novels deliberately raise the spectre of these gothic texts. As Gill Plain points out, 'Scottish crime fiction draws extensively upon its literary forebears: nearly every self-respecting crime novel carries an obligatory reference to Stevenson or his seminal novel'.[8] As well as such self-conscious gesturing towards specific gothic texts, there is also a wealth of recent Scottish crime fiction that evokes the gothic in a more subtle and embedded way, mediated by the stylistic tropes of noir.

Noir carries such a weight of social and aesthetic significance that it is worthwhile introducing the mode thoroughly before moving on to analyse the ways that it feeds into contemporary Scottish crime fiction. While the gothic has always been involved in Enlightenment values and refracted various phases of modernity, noir brings these negotiations to the foreground. It is very much the key context for this chapter because of its status as a transnational form and its heady brew of gothic and modernity. Noir is primarily associated with American crime melodramas of the 1940s and 1950s, which famously provide a rigorous critique of American society at that time. The mode is certainly not restricted to that specific historical and geographical juncture, however. As critics Jennifer Fay and Justus Nieland recognize, 'films noir have always been transnational objects of art, commerce, and critical fascination. As such, films noir have consistently raised questions about national authenticity and distinctiveness'.[9] Indeed, even when the term is applied solely to the classic-period American noirs, the form is emblematic of classical Hollywood aesthetics but also in some sense fundamentally anti-American. The

[8] Gill Plain, 'Concepts of Corruption: Crime Fiction and the Scottish "State"', in *The Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Literature*, ed. by Berthold Schoene (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), pp. 132-140 (p. 133).
[9] Jennifer Fay and Justus Neiland, *Film Noir: Hard-Boiled Modernity and the Cultures of Globalization* (London: Routledge, 2010), p. xiii.

aesthetic roots of noir are certainly transatlantic. Emerging from an uneasy tryst between popular American genre fiction and sophisticated European art cinema, the mode shows the influence of the hard-boiled crime novel, the gangster picture, horror, German expressionism, and French poetic realism. Critical readings of noir, which played a key role in crystallizing and developing its conventions, are also deeply engaged in transnational discourse. As Marc Vernet pithily puts it, 'the Americans made it and then the French invented it'.[10] Recent attempts to situate noir within wider artistic contexts, whether as a popular expression of modernist pessimism or as a modern articulation of gothic anxiety, also acknowledge its status as a thoroughly transnational form. It is these two ways of understanding noir with which this chapter is initially concerned.

Several critics of noir cite the gothic romance as one of its key, if somewhat overlooked, cultural influences.[11] Following this critical tradition, this thesis understands noir as one particular modern articulation of the gothic. This reading does not contradict the growing body of criticism concerned with the mode's connections with modernism. These connections are best elaborated by James Naremore when he defines American film noir as 'a kind of modernism in the popular cinema' on the grounds that 'it used unorthodox narration; it resisted sentiment and censorship; it reveled in the "social fantastic"; it demonstrated the ambiguity of human motives; and it made commodity culture seem like a

[10] Marc Vernet, '*Film Noir* on the Edge of Doom', in *Shades of Noir*, ed. by Joan Copjec (London: Verso, 1993), pp. 1-31 (p. 1).
[11] See Andrew Spicer, *Film Noir* (Essex: Pearson Education Limited, 2002), p. 10. See also Thomas Schatz, *Boom and Bust: American Cinema in the 1940s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), pp. 232-239. See also Misha Kavka, 'The Gothic on Screen', in *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*, ed. by Jerrold E. Hogle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 209-228 (pp. 219-221).

wasteland'.[12] These same characteristics equally serve to highlight the possibility of reading noir as a modern articulation of the gothic, or, indeed, a gothic formulation of modernity. The complex framing narratives, the taste for the grotesque and the barbaric, and the admission of contradictory, unpalatable human motives are long-established features of the gothic novel, found throughout the genre's classics including Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), *Justified Sinner*, *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897). The other two characteristics of noir that Naremore lists give this gothic content a renewed relevance in contexts of modernity. Roger W. Baines's outline of Pierre Mac Orlan's concept of the 'social fantastic' provides a good illustration of why noir can be read as a modern manifestation of gothic anxiety:

> For Mac Orlan, the notion of the social fantastic is the presence of the undefined, the mysterious and the threatening beneath the surface of modern society. It is the sinister, inexplicable nature of this phenomenon, the insidious threat as opposed to total, explicit horror that renders it more disturbing.[13]

Indeed, the work of photographers that Mac Orlan admired such as Brassaï (1889-1984) and André Kertész (1894-1984) provide fitting examples of the ways that the unsettling, oppressive, and erotic qualities of the modern urban environment can be foregrounded through off-kilter choices in lighting and perspective. Although the treatment of contemporary commodity culture as a wasteland has more overtly modernist connotations than the other characteristics Naremore mentions, this characteristic also has vaguely gothic roots.

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[12] James Naremore, *More Than Night: Film Noir in its Contexts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), p. 38.
[13] Roger W. Baines, *'Inquiétude' in the Work of Pierre Mac Orlan* (Atlanta: Rodopi, 2000), p. 36.

The wasteland motif, which is especially well-realised in Roman Polanski's neo-noir *Chinatown* (1974), is part of hard-boiled crime fiction's appropriation of Grail legends and it is traditionally a pagan motif that sees a barren landscape as a symptom of divine punishment or supernatural curse. Noir modifies this gothic trope, presenting the modern urban environment as an oppressive atmosphere of suspicion, paranoia, and despair. The setting acts as a kind of retribution for the shallow bourgeois consumerism and spiritual bankruptcy of its inhabitants. Such gothic images of a fallen world or hell-on-earth persist in noir fiction, mediated by contexts of modernity. As Wheeler Winston Dixon argues in his essay 'The Endless Embrace of Hell' (2006), '[Noir] embraces the disposability of modern culture right down to its rotten roots. We live in an eternal now, curving around the bend in ways that we can't see, foretelling a future riddled with rupture, uncertainty and deceit'.[14] The reasons that Naremore sees noir as a popular expression of modernist despair, then, equally endorse a reading of it as a gothic response to modernity. Botting's elucidation of the gothic touches on many of the same key points as Naremore's reading of noir, moreover, revealing further significant affinities between noir and gothic fiction's 'tales of darkness, desire and power':

> Gothic condenses the many perceived threats to [enlightenment and humanist] values, threats associated with supernatural and natural forces, imaginative excesses and delusions, religious and human evil, social transgression, mental disintegration and spiritual corruption […] Gothic writing remains fascinated by objects and practices that are constructed as negative, irrational, immoral and fantastic.[15]

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[14] Wheeler Winston Dixon, 'The Endless Embrace of Hell: Hopelessness and Betrayal in Film Noir', in *Cinema and Modernity*, ed. by Murray Pomerance (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2006), pp. 38-56 (p. 38).
[15] Botting, *Gothic*, p. 2.

With its emphasis on the supernatural, the primal, the psychological, and the fantastic, then, gothic fiction continually undermines the values and assumptions of mainstream human civilization's materialist worldview. Noir similarly operates in a fictive world where the incessant shadows, reflections, expressionistic dream sequences, hallucinations, and labyrinthine narratives gesture towards an imaginative realm that contradicts the kind of rational and materialist understandings of the world that are suggested by the mode's veneer of realism, an ambivalence which is well-represented in the passage from *Complicity* cited at the start of this chapter.

Much of what distinguishes noir fiction from its more realist counterpart, hard-boiled fiction, though they are not mutually exclusive categories, hinges on the modern manifestations of all-encompassing gothic anxiety found in noir texts. The hard-boiled tradition is characterized by cynicism, masculinity, social realism, and stylistic economy while noir tends towards disorientation, perversion, the uncanny, and a baroque richness of style. This distinction is perhaps most conspicuously revealed in those classic-period noir films (1941-1958) that are adapted from hard-boiled American novels. While the source material might play up its vernacular, no-nonsense, realist credentials, the film adaptations are suffused with a sophisticated visual style, generated mainly through the striking expressionistic interplay between light and dark, which aligns them with more conventionally gothic cultural forms. Billy Wilder's torrid 1944 film adaptation of James M. Cain's stylistically sparing crime novella *Double Indemnity* (1935) is a powerful example of this phenomenon, as Richard Schickel's discussion of Wilder's film reveals:

> Wilder's genius was to see – how consciously it is impossible to say – that this baroque manner would be aesthetically redeeming for Cain's disturbing matter, giving it a richness, a resonance, even, if you will, a touch of class that the writer's blunt exploration of brutal emotions by means of simple declarative sentences had not had on the printed page.[16]

The film noir style, then, saturates the hard-boiled tradition's supposedly unstylish and dispassionate crime narratives with a level of baroque richness and stylistic excess customarily associated with the gothic. Orson Welles's stylistic tour de force and nightmarish epitaph to the classic period of film noir, *Touch of Evil* (1958), is an especially compelling instance of the gothic finding undiluted expression in popular American crime cinema. There are, of course, many other less overtly hard-boiled examples of film noir from the classic period that demonstrate an affinity with the gothic such as *Stranger on the Third Floor* (1940), *Rebecca* (1940), *Citizen Kane* (1941), *Shadow of a Doubt* (1943), *Gaslight* (1944), *The Spiral Staircase* (1945), *The Strange Love of Martha Ivors* (1946) and *The Night of the Hunter* (1955). The expressionist precursors of noir are also very gothic in character. Like noir, German expressionist cinema, with its vertiginous angular sets, its chiaroscuro lighting, its emphasis on the outré and the grotesque, and its contemporary urban settings, equally constitutes a gothic negotiation of modernity. As well as German expressionism, the visual style of film noir also evokes the more populist, home-grown expressionism of the classic American horror films of the 1930s, such as Tod Browning's *Dracula* (1931), James Whale's *Frankenstein* (1931), and Rouben Mamoulian's *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1931), the conspicuous gothic content of

[16] Richard Schickel, *BFI Film Classics: Double Indemnity* (London: British Film Institute, 1992), p. 20.

which hardly needs further illumination. While hard-boiled crime fiction's engagements with the crises of modernity are overwhelmingly materialist, evident in the mode's straight-talking, working-class, masculine style, noir fiction deals with the same crises of modernity but uses baroque gothic stylistics.

In spite of the similarities and overlaps between hard-boiled and noir, then, these two categories are most appropriately understood in light of different aesthetic contexts. While this thesis's first chapter traces the contexts of Scottish crime fiction's hard-boiled side, such as the nation's socio-political landscape and its imaginative representations of class and gender, this chapter concerns itself with the noir dimensions of contemporary Scottish crime fiction, arguing that they are scaffolded by the particular articulations of gothic and noir that emerge in recent Scottish fiction outside the crime genre. Many of the non-crime texts in this category, in turn, incorporate features of the crime genre or demonstrate a certain proximity to it. There are naturally a number of complex, diffuse, and indirect transformations and interactions involved in contemporary Scottish crime fiction's invocation of noir, given that noir's origins are filmic, and that the mode is primarily associated with a cycle of American films produced during a specific period. Noir's use of an expressionist visual style and chiaroscuro lighting cannot be recreated directly in contemporary Scottish crime writing. The mode's gothic tropes of stylistic excess, foregrounding of narration, perversion, monstrous psychologies, guilt, and criminality, however, do find explicit expression in recent Scottish crime fiction.

These same gothic qualities, likewise informed by contexts of modernity, are a significant presence in the non-crime fiction that emerges from Scotland during the same period. In determining the Scottishness of Scottish crime fiction's engagement with the gothic, it is necessary to consider the relationship between Scottish fiction in general and the gothic. Discussions of Scottish gothic tend to focus on the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, investigating the gothic content of works by writers such as Robert Burns (1759-1796), Walter Scott (1771-1832), James Hogg (1770-1835), and Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-1894). More often overlooked, there are also various significant contributors of gothic fiction to *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* during the early nineteenth century, including John Galt (1779-1839), Patrick Fraser-Tytler (1791-1849), and Daniel Keyte Sandford (1798-1838), the best of whose stories are collected in Robert Morrison and Chris Baldick's *Tales of Terror from Blackwood's Magazine* (1995). Although they acknowledge that the motifs are not indigenous to Scotland, most critics nevertheless attempt to establish a peculiarly Scottish gothic that differs from English and other European variants of gothic. In common with most critical analyses of the subject, Angela Wright argues that a distinctively Scottish gothic emerges around the start of the nineteenth century that is intimately related to the historical specificities of the nation's socio-political landscape. Wright contends that the Union of the Parliaments in 1707 and the Jacobite rebellions of 1715 and 1745 laid the foundations for Scottish appropriations of gothic tropes and emphases:

> These events were of course intimately connected: together, their shadows were cast over the literary impossibility of a coherent Scottish identity […] To analyse their nation's fragmentation, [Scott, Hogg, and Stevenson] used recognisable Gothic

> tropes. Tales of haunted doubles, disowned sons and ineffectual heroes populate their fictional explorations of Scotland's fractured state.[17]

Supporting Wright's analysis, several examples of gothic fiction from Scotland which use these tropes are explicitly underpinned by the historical events in question, such as Scott's *Waverley* (1814), Stevenson's novels *Kidnapped* (1886) and *The Master of Ballantrae* (1889), and even contemporary examples of historical Scottish fiction such as James Robertson's *Joseph Knight* (2004). There is a parallel between Wright's claim and the arguments proposed in the first chapter of this thesis. In the same way as the conventions of the American hard-boiled mode were especially well-suited to negotiating Scottish anxieties about class and gender for post-industrial Scottish crime fiction, the motifs of gothic fiction proved particularly resonant for examples of nineteenth-century Scottish fiction concerned with the fragmentation of national identity.

While also acknowledging the significance of the Union and the Jacobite rebellions, Ian Duncan further relates the development of Scottish gothic to the Scottish Enlightenment in the eighteenth century. He focuses on the polarization of the Scottish people at this time into such oppositional camps as urban versus rural, Lowlands versus Highlands, and literati versus traditional folk communities.[18] Urbanization, scientific and technological advances, and the passing of organic communities were obviously not phenomena that were unique to Scotland at this time. Indeed, the fourth chapter of this thesis deals with golden-age detective fiction,

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[17] Angela Wright, 'Scottish Gothic', in *The Routledge Companion to Gothic*, ed. by Catherine Spooner and Emma McEvoy (London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 73-82 (p. 73).
[18] Ian Duncan, 'Walter Scott, James Hogg and Scottish Gothic', in *A Companion to the Gothic*, ed. by David Punter (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2001), pp. 70-80 (pp. 70-71).

and at one point outlines the ways that these same processes affected constructions not of Scottishness, but of Englishness. In Scotland, the sense of polarization was intensified by the Scottish Enlightenment. Excising 'Scotticisms' from their language and often defining themselves as 'North British', the eighteenth-century Scottish intelligentsia strove to dissociate themselves from the Jacobites and Highland clans. Yet, paradoxically, in doing so, they made Scotland's Enlightenment distinctively Scottish: more elitist, cosmopolitan, and reflective of that particular phase of modernity than those of other nations.[19] According to Duncan, this schism in Scottish culture foregrounded the relation between civilized and primitive values, generating a national preoccupation that is particularly fertile for gothic fiction:

> Scottish Gothic represents (with greater historical and anthropological specificity than in England) the uncanny recursion of an ancestral identity alienated from modern life. Its fictions elaborate a set of historically determinate intuitions about the nature of modernity – the discursive project, after all, of the Scottish Enlightenment human sciences […] Recognising its separation from other forms of identity, the modern mind consigns them to a superseded, primitive past – but then assuages its new sense of estrangement by reassembling them as the constituents of an organic national culture. Scottish gothic, however, narrates a parody or critique of the late Enlightenment project of romance revival, in which the reanimation of traditional forms is botched or trangressive.[20]

Duncan's argument here is highly illuminating. Resonating with the passage from *Complicity* at the start of this chapter, he argues the gothic is already intimately engaged with the clash between modernity and the traditional ways of life being consigned to 'a superseded, primitive past'. This understanding of the mode helps

[19] See Colin Kidd, *Subverting Scotland's Past: Scottish Whig Historians and the Creation of Anglo-British Identity, 1689-c. 1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 3, p. 214.
[20] Duncan, 'Walter Scott, James Hogg and Scottish Gothic', pp. 70-71.

explain why gothic aesthetic strategies prove so effective in noir's negotiation of twentieth-century modernity. Indeed, this dynamic is also resonant with the late twentieth-century Scottish crime texts discussed in the first chapter of this thesis, in which traditional, communitarian masculinities re-emerge in contemporary Scotland in 'botched or transgressive' forms, corrupted by bourgeois individualism and corporate globalization. Like Wright, Duncan relates the rise of Scottish gothic in the nineteenth century to the social history of the nation in the previous century. He recognizes that the gothic binary of civilized and primitive can be readily aligned with the two divergent modes of Scottishness becoming apparent at this time: the Scottish Enlightenment, which exemplified rationalism, sophistication, and cosmopolitanism, and the traditional, rustic, organic communities that were now increasingly dismissed as insular, superstitious, and resistant to progress in contrast to this explosion of intellectual and scientific development. The tension between these modes of Scottishness is at the forefront of the literature of Burns, Scott, and Hogg, emerging most conspicuously in their negotiation between Scots and English languages. The tension is well-executed, for instance, in the vast distance between the character of 'the editor' and the character of 'James Hogg' in Hogg's own novel *Justified Sinner*. James Kelman's analysis of this division in the novel is revealing:

> The literati being portrayed by Hogg were in the main contemptuous of his inferior social standing. As well as being a famous poet he had spent much of his life as a shepherd and he spoke in the language of his own cultural background [...] Hogg's novel is written in the ordinary standard English literary form of the period. When he brings the literati into the story he has them speak in that same standard form. But then he introduces himself into the story and this 'self' is the man who is employed at wheeling and dealing in ewes, lambs and rams at country markets; not

> the 'self' as writer. He has this shepherd 'self' speak in the phoneticised language of someone who, by English literary standards, is a certain social inferior.[21]

It is indeed striking that Hogg presents a fictional version of himself in his highly sophisticated, self-reflexive novel as an apparently-naïve-but-in-fact-canny rustic type, a form of anti-modern Scottishness later popularized in films like *Whisky Galore!* (1949), *The Wicker Man* (1973), and *Local Hero* (1983). As Kelman's interest in this tension suggests, the eighteenth century's two divergent modes of Scottishness continue to exert their influence on late twentieth-century Scottish fiction. This influence is especially apparent in recent Scottish gothic. As Duncan Petrie argues, contemporary Scottish fiction's fixation on the dark and destructive aspects of Scottish life 'not only asserts distance from the respectability and refinement of bourgeois, Anglo-centric high culture. It can equally be regarded as a reaction to the cloying sentimentality and whimsy of a Kailyard tradition'.[22]

Like Wright and Duncan's speculations on the possibility of a distinctively Scottish gothic, David Punter's fascinating article on contemporary Scottish gothic 'Heart Lands' (1999) turns to the issue of history. He teases out the latent gothic elements of a range of recent Scottish texts, including works by Iain Banks, James Kelman, Alasdair Gray, Janice Galloway, and Irvine Welsh, arguing that the gothic mode is especially rich in possibilities for a nation seen to be lacking independence and political autonomy:

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[21] James Kelman, 'A Reading from the Work of Noam Chomsky and the Scottish Tradition in the Philosophy of Common Sense', in James Kelman, *"And The Judges Said…": Essays* (London: Vintage, 2003), pp. 140-186 (pp. 177-178).

[22] Duncan Petrie, *Contemporary Scottish Fictions: Film, Television and the Novel* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), p. 115.

> But if we look at their texts as a kind of mosaic, then we can see how issues of suppression in a stateless national culture can find a mode of expression which had much to do with the Gothic, and can also help us to illuminate some key points about Gothic as a mode of the telling, and remembering, of history […] the Gothic mode, insofar as it has to do with direct materials of nightmare, with phantoms and the crypt, will find a particular way of forcing itself to the surface under any cultural circumstances which are characterised by lack, insufficiency, mourning.[23]

Punter's article explores how the specific configurations of abuse, addiction, madness, barbarism, unsympathetic institutions, and the dissolution of the self in examples of recent Scottish gothic do not represent an evasion of Scotland's political realities, but in fact reveal the fissures and anxieties engendered by Scotland's condition as a stateless nation. As Punter suggests, 'the Gothic's chief mode of functioning' hinges on 'a certain dealing with the necessary distortions of history'.[24] This argument is in accordance with Wright's account of Scottish gothic in the eighteenth century and her reading of the gothic as a mode suited to analysing the fragmentation and complication of national identity.

A number of contemporary Scottish crime narratives can be seen to adopt the distinctively Scottish dimensions of the gothic outlined by these critics, taking up the same concerns with modernity and continuing to negotiate the liminal area between civilization and barbarism. Before going on to explore two particularly compelling case-studies, Iain Banks's *Complicity* (1993) and Louise Welsh's *The Cutting Room* (2002), in more depth, it is worth surveying a sample of texts to illustrate the richness and variety involved in Scottish crime fiction's permutations of gothic and noir. A fascinating novel which Robert Crawford describes as 'the oddest of all

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[23] David Punter, 'Heart Lands: Contemporary Scottish Gothic', in *Gothic: Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies, Volume IV: Twentieth Century Gothic: Our Monsters, Our Pets*, ed. by Fred Botting and Dale Townshend (Routledge: London, 2004), pp. 291-311 (pp. 291, 308).
[24] Punter, 'Heart Lands', p. 292.

Scottish detective stories', Frank Kuppner's *A Very Quiet Street: A Novel of Sorts* (1989), is underpinned by an intricate gothic structure.[25] Resisting easy classification and wilfully fostering uncertainty, Kuppner's text is a hybrid of history, fiction, and autobiography. In the 'novel', Kuppner, or some sort of fictionalized version of himself, embarks on a rigorous investigation of the Oscar Slater trial, a real-life 1908 case in which a Jewish German immigrant living in Glasgow was found guilty of the murder of an 83-year-old spinster named Marion Gilchrist despite various glaring inconsistencies and a lack of evidence. *A Very Quiet Street* presents the Oscar Slater case in a wildly non-linear, labyrinthine fashion with a strong emphasis on coincidence, digression, memory, authorial intervention, and seemingly endless re-interpretation. Even the appended introduction, which purports to reveal the facts in a straightforward chronological order for the benefit of readers not familiar with the case, incorporates a proviso: '(On the other hand, I am promising nothing)'.[26] In his role as narrator, Kuppner reveals that he was born in the neighbouring house to one where Miss Gilchrist was murdered (*AVQS*, 10), prompting him to make countless autobiographical connections to the case. These connections range from incredible coincidences to deliberately contrived inconsequential links between the initials of the people involved in the case and his own distant relatives. The narrative's incessant digressions are playfully foregrounded by the conspicuous strings of parentheses that appear on most pages, including seven consecutive closing brackets at one point (*AVQS*, 180). For a text that sets itself up as a thoroughgoing historical

[25] Robert Crawford, *Scotland's Books: A History of Scottish Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2009), p. 686.
[26] Frank Kuppner, *A Very Quiet Street* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1989), p. 1. Subsequent references to this text will use this edition with the page numbers indicated in parenthesis.

investigation drawing on evidence and eye-witness accounts, and examining the inadequacies of the early twentieth-century Scottish justice system, *A Very Quiet Street*'s incongruous use of baroque aesthetic strategies is successful in the sense that it presents a particular distortion of history that mirrors the opacities and injustices of the case in question. Set in Nairn in 1626, Shona MacLean's *The Redemption of Alexander Seaton* (2008) similarly takes up the issue of history in a gothic fashion. It works as a straightforward historical novel, revolving around a fallen minister who becomes embroiled in a plot that centres on murder, religion, witch hunts, sectarianism, conspiracy, and alchemy, but it also conforms to the generic expectations of the twentieth-century crime narrative.

Although not crime novels in any generic sense, several of John Burnside's contemporary gothic novels are also relevant to the contexts of this chapter. Perhaps the most germane is *Glister* (2008), a dystopian crime novel set in a fictional small-town named Homeland, in which teenage boys occasionally disappear from the outskirts of the wasteland around the town's defunct but still toxic chemical plant. The narrator, a fifteen-year-old named Leonard describes the sense of alienation that defines his home-town: 'the former golf course, conveniently situated so as to divide the good people in the nice houses from the ghosts and ruffians of the Innertown, now nothing more than a ghetto for poisoned, cast-off workers like my old man'.[27] Burnside's troubling novel involves quasi-religious human sacrifice, torture, a complicit policeman, and disaffected, feral youths who murder a social misfit they suspect of being a paedophile (*G*, 170). With its combination of intense gothic

[27] John Burnside, *Glister* [2008] (London: Vintage, 2009), p. 61. Subsequent references to this text will use this edition with the page numbers indicated in parenthesis.

horror and a convincingly sketched backdrop of post-industrial small-town Scotland, *Glister* is a valuable contribution to the wide range of contemporary Scottish crime fiction that depicts the uncanny return of barbarism within the contexts of modernity.

Iain Banks

One Scottish crime novel that proves a particularly compelling case study for this chapter, then, is Iain Banks's *Complicity*. Like William McIlvanney and Irvine Welsh, Banks is not primarily considered a crime writer. Indeed, if any genre is directly associated with him, it is science fiction. Since 1987, he has produced much-celebrated and internationally successful works of science fiction published under Iain M. Banks, in roughly equal quantities to his contemporary gothic novels. However, as with McIlvanney and Welsh, there are certain tendencies in his work, especially the latter category, that make his participation in the crime genre seem a natural and fitting move. Banks first made waves in the Scottish literary scene in the mid 1980s with his notorious debut novel *The Wasp Factory* (1984), a blackly funny, contemporary gothic tale about a suggestively-surnamed teenage boy named Frank Cauldhame who has murdered three members of his family in a variety of inventively macabre ways: 'That's my score to date. Three. I haven't killed anybody for years, and don't intend to ever again. It was just a stage I was going through'.[28] Frank spends his days living according to a quasi-religion of his own invention, which involves the ritualistic torture and killing of animals. Throughout the novel,

[28] Iain Banks, *The Wasp Factory* [1984] (London: Abacus, 1990), p. 42. Subsequent references to this text will use this edition and the page numbers will be indicated in parenthesis.

he indulges a faintly primaeval vision of masculinity akin to the more misogynistic constructions outlined in this thesis's first chapter: 'My greatest enemies are Women and the Sea. These things I hate. Women because they are weak and stupid and live in the shadow of men and are nothing compared to them' (*TWF*, 43). This sort of passage becomes deeply ironic in light of the novel's twist-in-the-tail revelation that Frank was actually born a female but raised as a male by his father with the help of hormone injections and a fabricated back-story about his genitals being mauled by a dog when he was an infant. *The Wasp Factory* provides a distinctly modern manifestation of the gothic, as Cairns Craig's insightful comments about the novel demonstrate: 'Frank is *Frank*-enstein, created by his mad scientist father […] Frank is also constructed as a parody of Freudian psychology'.[29] The 1990 Abacus paper-back edition of *The Wasp Factory* famously used some of the most negative reviews alongside the positive ones, both of which tended to emphasise the extremities of the novel's violence and depravity. Quotations from the various reviews cited in the front matter of the edition describe it in the following terms: 'Death and blood and gore fill the pages', 'a work of unparalleled depravity', 'the lurid literary equivalent of a video nasty', and 'ghoulish frivolity and a good deal of preposterous sadism' (*TWF*, i-iii). As Craig suggests, 'By that time, the dubious reviews had become an accolade and Banks had become a phenomenon'.[30] These popular perceptions of Banks as a writer of violent, grotesque, and controversial fiction were well-established by the time of *Complicity*'s publication and they play a role in the

[29] Cairns Craig, *Iain Banks's 'Complicity': A Reader's Guide* (New York: Continuum, 2002), p. 9.
[30] Craig, *Iain Banks's 'Complicity'*, p. 8.

novel's baroque, unnerving aesthetic strategies, an argument that will be elucidated later in this chapter.

A particularly unorthodox crime novel, *Complicity* is even more pessimistic and lurid in its representation of bodily horror than Banks's debut. Indeed, Banks sardonically describes *Complicity* as 'A bit like *The Wasp Factory* except without the happy ending and redeeming air of cheerfulness' (*C*, i). The main character and chief narrator is Cameron Colley, a left-wing, anti-establishment, substance-abusing investigative journalist who works for a fictional Edinburgh newspaper called 'The Caledonian'. The majority of the novel follows Colley as he becomes increasingly implicated in a series of brutal murders and assaults, the victims of which are rich and powerful right-wing public figures. These attacks take the form of chillingly inventive and ironic punishments for the worst excesses of society. Reading *Complicity* alongside other examples of crime fiction that function as 'socio-political critique', Horsley argues that 'Banks uses the psychopath both as a metaphor and a critic of a sick society […] He is a product of the system, "a businessman", settling accounts for the exploited'.[31] In the novel, then, a rich right-wing newspaper editor is thrown from the parapet of his balcony and impaled on the high metal railings of his home, providing a gruesome pun on the journalistic term 'spiked', which refers to the deliberate withholding of a story from publication often for ideological reasons, but the use of the balcony and railing also serves to critique the character's bourgeois property values. An unethical arms trader has his arms slowly and painfully amputated using tight lengths of rope. A high court judge who has been deliberately lenient in his sentencing of rapists has an act of sexual violence

[31] Lee Horsley, *Twentieth-Century Crime Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 186.

perpetrated against him. There are various other murders and attacks on unscrupulous characters involved in politics and business. Unbeknownst to Colley and to the reader, the attacks are being carried out by his childhood friend Andy Gould, but the complex stylistic and narrative decisions involved mean that Colley is open to suspicion for the majority of the novel.

Colley is initially associated with these attacks because he once wrote a semi-ironic television review for his newspaper which seemed to advocate vigilante violence against the very people who have now been murdered or assaulted. His article proposes a radical alternative to calculatedly hard-hitting criminal investigation and consumer affairs television programmes such as *The Cook Report* (1985-1998). Instead of a programme that investigates and confronts the standard public enemies of corrupt landlords, drug dealers, and rogue traders, Colley's article light-heartedly fantasizes about:

> a Real Avenger, a Radical Equaliser who'll take on some alternative hate-figures. Somebody who'll give people like James Anderton, Judge Jamieson and Sir Toby Bissett a taste of their own medicine, somebody who'll attack the asset strippers and the arms smugglers (ministers of HMG included – listening, Mr Persimmon?); somebody who'll stand up against the tycoons who put their profits before others' safety, like Sir Rufus Carter; somebody who'll punish the captains of industry who parrot the time-honoured phrase about their shareholders' interests coming first as they close down *profitable* factories and throw thousands out of work, just so that their already comfortable investors in the Home Counties and Marbella can make that little bit extra that always comes in *so* handy darling. (*C*, 108)

This is not merely flippant editorializing, however. Throughout the novel, he sincerely articulates this kind of opinion and often expresses sympathies with the killer's mission. Colley is subject to further police suspicion because he has no substantive alibis for the times of the murders, having been following up tantalizing

phone-calls about a political conspiracy which were fed to him by a mysterious source calling himself 'Mr Archer' and which directed him to isolated locations in the vicinity of the attacks.

The sections concerning Colley are interspersed with shorter sections describing the murders and assaults in all their grotesque and gory detail, narrated, rather like the opening of *Laidlaw*, from the point of view of the killer but using a disconcerting second-person narrative voice. Unlike the opening of *Laidlaw*, however, where the second-person narrative voice creates a sense of empathy and humanizes the confused and guilt-ridden character, here it both helps to withhold the identity of the mysterious mission-orientated serial killer and it creates an uncomfortable sense of complicity with the crimes. These two effects are both crucial components in the novel's complex aesthetic strategies, generating certain expectations and contributing to its intertextual resonances. They are evident, for instance, during the second attack, when the killer is required to subdue his intended victim's elderly wife beforehand:

> You reach the foot of the stairs. Mrs Jamieson's white-haired head appears beyond the banister rails to your right, her face turning to you.
>
> You swing round, seeing her start to react, mouth dropping. You already know what you're going to do, how you're going to play this, so you punch her, knocking her down. She collapses to the floor, making little flustered, bird-like noises. You hope you didn't hit her too hard. You haul her up and keep your hand over her mouth as you drag her upstairs. (*C*, 35)

The strict emotional discipline obliquely revealed here, particularly in the last two sentences, paradoxically renders the use of the self-addressing 'you' in this context especially disturbing. The coldly rational character has no desire to harm Mrs

Jamieson but feels he has no choice and incapacitates her out of a perverse sense of duty. As Mirna Radin-Sabadoš points out: 'The psychological effect of this fairly simple device is immense and the reader is placed in a position inside the story as an independent "underlying" observer sharing consciousness with the character but not identifying with him'.[32] Indeed, although the reader is powerless to affect the repugnant decisions to which they are party, the device seems constantly to accuse them of being involved or complicit in these decisions: 'You listen to him as he curses you and threatens you, and you are still unsure. You couldn't decide when you were planning this whether to infect him with HIV-positive blood or not' (*C*, 38). Forcing the reader into the position of the killer and giving them complete access to his thought-processes does little to make him a sympathetic character. The unquestioning moral certitude of the particular character and the explicitly described acts of gory violence that he calmly perpetrates, rather, creates a powerful alienation effect that is paradoxically denied and intensified by the use of the self-addressing "you".

As well as stylistically forging a sense of complicity between the reader and the character, the striking use of a second-person narrative voice goes hand in hand with the unorthodox narrators of film noir such as the frequent flashback voice-overs in films such as *Out of the Past* (1947), the inexplicable retrospective voice-over from a dead character in Billy Wilder's *Sunset Blvd.* (1950), and, most relevant, the uninterrupted point-of-view shots used in Robert Montgomery's Chandler-

[32] Mirna Radin-Sabadoš, 'Beyond Crime and Punishment: Metaphor of Violence in Iain Banks's *Complicity*', *English Language and Literature Studies in the Context of European Language Diversity*, 2 (2005) <http://www.sdas.edus.si/Elope/ELOPE-2.pdf> [accessed 22 September 2012], 155-164 (p. 162).

adaptation *Lady in the Lake* (1947), which constitute a form of second-person narrative in themselves. Indeed, the promotional poster for the film boasted 'You and Robert Montgomery solve a murder mystery together!'[33] Reading point-of-view shots in this way, Rouben Mamoulian's lurid film version of *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1931), which presents much of Stevenson's novella from Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde's perspective, becomes particularly resonant as a precursor to *Complicity*. Indeed, unorthodox strategies of narration also have a history in gothic fiction, such as the *mise-en-abyme* narratives and unreliable narrators of *Frankenstein* and *Justified Sinner*, as well as *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. *Complicity*'s use of a second-person narrative voice, then, contributes to a baroque style that deliberately draws attention to itself in the same way as the unconventional narrators of noir and gothic.

This device is first notably used in a Scottish context in Lewis Grassic Gibbon's *Scots Quair* novels in the 1930s, where the subtle experimentation with Scots and syntax allows for a fluid shift between a second-person narrative voice that refers to a wider community and a self-addressing 'you' that refers to a specific character. The second-person narrative voice is also later used inventively by Ron Butlin throughout his short, dark novels such as *The Sound of My Voice* (1987) and *Night Visits* (2003), by Kelman in several of his novels, and by Irvine Welsh in *Crime* (2008). This style of second-person narrative voice is also used briefly in *A Very Quiet Street*, which otherwise uses a first-person narrator, for a strangely unsettling passage in which the narrator speculates about a real-life murderer's possible thought-processes:

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[33] *Lady in the Lake*, dir. by Robert Montgomery (MGM, 1947).

> Good God, she is not dead yet! The whole probably non-existent edifice is beginning to totter. But, whatever else happens, she must not speak. You pick up the chair nearby and hammer her head with the lethally heavy wooden end of one of its legs. There is soon more noise at the door. Enough is enough. Put your coat and hat on (unless, as is more probable, you have never taken them off) and wait. (*AVQS*, 102)

Such complex usage of the second-person narrative voice, and its remarkable frequency in recent Scottish fiction, can be productively related, however, to the more 'innocent' conversational use of the form seen in *A Scots Quair*. In an article about Grassic Gibbon's use of the self-addressing 'you', Graham Trengove argues that:

> It reflects the everyday habit in spoken English of making an observation which most often includes reference to the condition or views of the speaker but more importantly is felt by him to have a wider validity, which may or may not extend to the condition of the addressee […] The origins of the locution may lie in a desire to indicate the assumption of, or to emphasise, common ground between the parties to the conversation or in a desire to avoid the opprobrium which some cultures direct at the overt expression of personal opinion or reference to personal experience […] In part [its value] lies in its powerfully suggesting a homogenous body of opinion.[34]

In light of Trengove's remarks, then, it might be said that the preponderance of the self-addressing 'you' in recent Scottish fiction is line with its tendency to celebrate features of Scottish life that are populist, democratic, communal, and self-effacing. These communitarian traditions are discussed in further detail elsewhere this thesis, clearly corresponding with the hard-boiled anti-elitism discussed the first chapter, the lowbrow, non-official folk humour under consideration in the third chapter, and the traditional rural communities explored in the fourth chapter.

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[34] Graham Trengove, 'Who is You? Grammar and Grassic Gibbon', *Scottish Literary Journal*, 2.2 (1975), 47-62 (p. 48).

Trengove's argument that the device assumes a 'wider validity' or suggests 'a homogenous body of opinion' is also particularly pertinent to *Complicity*. The characters who are attacked might be seen to represent the worst excesses of Thatcherism, the tenets of which were particularly unpopular in Scotland for the reasons outlined extensively in this thesis's introduction. This interpretation is certainly in line with Banks's comments, cited in the introduction, that Thatcherism made him feel 'alienated and a lot more Scottish'. The parallel between the victims and Thatcherism is suggested very early on in the novel when the killer notices some framed photographs in the first victim's house: 'There is one of Sir Toby Bissett with Mrs Thatcher, both smiling. You smiled, too' (*C*, 5). The use of the self-addressing 'you' for a character that is meting out his own disturbing brand of vigilante justice on apparent proponents of Thatcherism, then, has further resonances in a contemporary Scottish political context. In its negotiation of this matter, *Complicity* is disorientating in its deliberate blurring of limits and values, and its insistence on unearthing the horrors and hypocrisies of various moral and political positions. As Horsley puts it:

> The question of whether the victims deserve the retribution inflicted on them is central, as is the question of whether one can remain detached (as Cameron attempts to do), or whether one is in fact *always* choosing and must come to terms with the moral implications of one's choices.[35]

Indeed, the novel forcefully imposes these questions upon the reader by foregrounding their simultaneous involvement and detachment. The reader is in an uninvolved position in the sense that they are unable to shape the outcome of the

[35] Horsley, *Twentieth-Century Crime Fiction*, p. 187.

novel but they must nevertheless engage with the uncomfortable vicarious thrills of occupying the perspective of a dehumanized and unsympathetic character brutally attacking figures who have committed terrible atrocities themselves: 'a sick response to a sick system' (*C*, 301). Using the second-person to represent the inner life of the killer, then, is deeply problematic when it ostensibly assumes that his actions and the politicized sentiments they embody have a 'wider validity' for the novel's readership. Indeed, the novel is, in some sense, a political wish-fulfilment fantasy and there is a sense that the 'complicity' of the title refers not with action but with inaction.

Various characters in the novel act as an internal audience and voice this interpretation of the killer's actions. Colley's girlfriend Yvonne says of the rapist-lenient judge: 'Maybe men like that should have it happen to them […] Rape; assault. See how they like it' (*C*, 131). Even when he is under police suspicion of murder, Colley similarly confides to a friend: 'I mean, by the sound of it every one of the bastards deserved to die' (*C*, 118). Unsurprisingly, Andy Gould's eloquent explanation of his actions also backs up the interpretation. In an ironic overturning of Thatcherite values of enterprise and entrepreneurialism, he argues that he is 'like a businessman' and that he is 'addressing a need', and that his attacks are not significantly different from the more indirect, socially-embedded acts of violence that are enacted in society:

> [T]hey were all powerful men, all rich […] they all treated people like shit, literally like shit; something unpleasant to be disposed of. It was like they'd forgotten their humanity and could never find it again, and there was only one way to remind them of it, and remind others like them, and make them feel frightened and vulnerable and *powerless*, the way they made other people feel all the time […] We have

> chosen to put profits before people, money before morality, dividends before decency, fanaticism before fairness, and our own trivial comforts before the unspeakable agonies of others […] in that climate of culpability, that perversion of moral values, nothing, *nothing* I have done has been out of place or out of order or wrong. (*C*, 297-301)

Having a variety of characters frequently express such opinions, whether they genuinely believe them or whether there is an element of irony or hyperbole involved, contributes to the uncomfortable sense of complicity that the novel foists upon the reader with the use of the second-person narrative voice. Through these components, the novel darkly intimates that the killer's acts of violence are backed up by 'a homogenous body of opinion' with which it assumes the reader agrees or ought to agree. Any such agreement is simultaneously rendered abhorrent, of course, by the visceral descriptions of the brutal attacks. Since the killer's acts of violence are ironic punishments for the diffuse, institutionalized acts of violence that his victims have committed, the novel obliquely elicits a sense of repulsion towards the socio-political establishment. In this way, *Complicity* echoes Johnnie Byrne's suggestion that the 'whole human world is a money-lending racket' in *The Hard Man* (1977) and the bare-knuckling boxing scenes from *The Big Man* (1985), as discussed in the first chapter of this thesis. There is a further level of complicity involved here too, functioning in terms of the genre. In some sense, the reader wills the acts of horrific violence simply by electing to read a gothic crime thriller, especially one written by an author whose work is famously violent, lurid, and grotesque, a perception of Banks brought out by the remarkable reviews of *The Wasp Factory*.

Another noir trope that is given a particularly Scottish resonance in *Complicity* is that of the double or split psyche motif. In his rigorous study of the subject, *Doubles* (1985), Karl Miller argues that this paradigm is a key feature of literary modernity:

> The double stands at the start of that cultivation of uncertainty by which the literature of the modern world has come to be distinguished, and has yet to be expelled from it […] Duality was to take part both in the Freudian and in the Russian revolutions: to the second of these it brought the dialectic of Hegel, with its progressive leaps and interplay of opposites, and it also brought the quasi-religious duo of exploiters and exploited, 'them' and 'us'.[36]

Complicity's use of the double dovetails the two contexts to which Miller alludes. The politicized doubling of 'exploiters and exploited' is obviously very relevant to the novel's depiction of Scottish attitudes towards Thatcherism. In this light, the second-person narration is an ideal device with which to complicate the perceived boundary between exploiters and exploited, 'them' and 'us', as *Complicity* does both ideologically and aesthetically. Miller's allusion to duality's role in the Freudian revolution is pertinent to this chapter too. Andrew Spicer argues that one of the major contexts of film noir is the growing popular awareness of psychoanalysis in American society during the decade leading up to the emergence of noir:

> Film noir's depiction of a wide variety of disturbed mental states is one of it most arresting features and linked to the growth of psychoanalysis during the interwar period so that its terminology and concepts had penetrated into popular consciousness […] film noir is extremely adept at suggesting, often through mise-en-scène, repressed or hidden sexual longings and murderous impulses, where violence and desire are often disturbingly melded.[37]

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[36] Karl Miller, *Doubles: Studies in Literary History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. viii.
[37] Andrew Spicer, *Film Noir* (Essex: Pearson Education Limited, 2002), pp. 22-23.

These Freudian conflations of violence with desire, and sex with death, are especially relevant to Louise Welsh's *The Cutting Room* (2002), another Scottish crime novel discussed later in this chapter.

It is notable that duality also figures prominently in American fiction in general, emerging as a defining presence in this national context long before its noir incarnations. Poe's short story 'William Wilson' (1839), for example, is an early and highly influential example of the doppelgänger narrative. Like 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue', it is an archetypal gothic work in which its sinister content is further bolstered by contexts of rationality. Miller devotes two chapters of his study *Doubles* to American fiction, charting the significance of duality to works of American romanticism, such as Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* (1851) and Nathaniel Hawthorn's *The Scarlet Letter* (1850), as well as to twentieth-century American writers including Norman Mailer and Kurt Vonnegut. Like the critical attempts to account for the rise of Scottish gothic in terms of developments in social history cited earlier in this study, Miller reads duality as a manifestation of America's creation myth:

> The New World began when romance began in literature, and it entered upon a divided relationship with the Old, rejecting the past which it was nevertheless to resume and perpetuate. It became a haven for outcasts, but also their pursuer, a strange place of chases and journeys, which has been experienced as both virtuous and monstrous.[38]

As this argument implies, the kind of American gothic that underpins film noir's reading of modernity participates in transnational discourse even in its earliest

[38] Miller, *Doubles*, p. 349.

incarnations, explaining why the American hard-boiled and noir variants of crime fiction should prove such effective models in terms of international reception and appropriation. This compatibility might be especially the case with Scotland for various reasons.

Indeed, the double is naturally a key feature of gothic fiction, detective fiction, American fiction, and film noir, but it is a trope that has also received a special formulation in Scottish literary discourse, emerging in Hogg's *Justified Sinner*, various short stories from *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, and Stevenson's *Jekyll and Hyde*, but remaining a particularly resonant feature of Scottish literature into the twentieth century. In his article on contemporary Scottish gothic, David Punter argues that Alasdair Gray's work is impregnated by 'the sense of an unseen pressure to bifurcate, divide'.[39] Indeed, as its subtitle indicates, Gray's most famous novel *Lanark: A Life in Four Parts* (1981) presents various forms of double, such as Duncan Thaw and Lanark, Glasgow and Unthank, and social realism and dystopian fantasy. Gray's short allegorical story 'The Spread of Ian Nicol' (1983), in which the main character, 'a riveter by trade', one day inexplicably splits in two down the middle, provides a more direct treatment of the motif.[40] Naturally, the splitting of the self receives its most convincing expressions in narratives of madness. Two short stories from Alan Bissett's volume of new Scottish gothic, *Damage Land* (2001), engage with the trope in this way. Brian McCabe's quietly surreal and disturbing story 'The Host' (2001) is narrated by a deeply inhibited, paranoid recluse who enters into a conversation with a head that appears to be

[39] David Punter, 'Heart Lands: Contemporary Scottish Gothic', p. 294.
[40] Alasdair Gray, 'The Spread of Ian Nicol', in Alasdair Gray, *Unlikely Stories, Mostly* (London: Penguin, 1984), pp. 4-7 (p. 4).

growing out of another man's neck, offering a striking image of a split persona in this other character while the narrator is effectively in dialogue with another part of himself.[41] Jackie Kay's 'The Woman with Fork and Knife Disorder' (2001) likewise offers a chilling account of insanity, but one which is more grounded in the domestic. At the climax of the story, the obsessive-compulsive protagonist Irene Elliott feels an urge to split herself in two, and the language used foregrounds the split psyche paradigm in a variety of interesting ways:

> She was beside herself, that was true. Beside her selves. Married and separated. Mother and daughter. Part of her knew what she was doing and knew it was bad; but the other part couldn't stop her. She just couldn't stop her. She didn't want to stop her. She wanted to go all the way. To cut herself in two. Knife and Fork.[42]

These examples, along with a plethora of Scottish texts that self-consciously rework *Justified Sinner* and *Jekyll and Hyde*, including Emma Tennant's novels *The Bad Sister* (1978) and *Two Women of London* (1989), Gray's *Poor Things* (1992), and Ian Rankin's novels *Knots & Crosses* (1987), *Hide & Seek* (1991), and *The Black Book* (1993), illustrate the prevalence of the split psyche or double motif in a variety of different kinds of contemporary Scottish writing.

There is no critical consensus on the reason for this prevalence, however. The motif tends to be interpreted in relation to Scotland's own distinctive brand of Calvinism, which emerged in the 1560s under the domineering influence of John Knox (c. 1514-1572). John Herdman, for instance, argues that it is not a coincidence that Hogg and Stevenson both produced notable treatments of the paradigm:

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[41] Brian McCabe, 'The Host', in *Damage Land: New Scottish Gothic Fiction*, ed. by Alan Bissett (Edinburgh: Polygon, 2001), pp. 9-19.
[42] Jackie Kay, 'The Woman with Knife and Fork Disorder', in *Damage Land*, pp. 79-98 (p. 95).

> That such a small country as Scotland should have contributed, in James Hogg and R. L. Stevenson, two of the foremost masters of the double is a remarkable fact, but though the ultimate reasons for this heightened Scottish awareness of duality may lie deep in the national psyche and history, a proximate causation in the schematic polarities of Calvinist theology can scarcely be in doubt.[43]

Herdman's implication is that Calvinism makes such radical demands on the individual for purity that the harmonious integrity of the psyche becomes unsustainable, resulting in a splitting or doubling of the personality, between outward demonstrations of righteousness and secret guilt-ridden indulgences of sin. Notably, a number of parallels can be drawn between Scottish Calvinism and New England Puritanism in America, which forms the foundation for archetypal works of American gothic such as Poe's 'The Pit and the Pendulum' (1842) and Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*. The Calvinist context is certainly very pertinent to *Justified Sinner*, being the central feature of the narrative itself, and is also relevant to Stevenson's *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, emerging in its theme of repressed desires. There are problems, however, with categorically attributing recent occurrences of the motif in Scottish literature to Knox's Calvinism, given the centuries that have passed, the global transformations that have occurred, and the increased secularization of the United Kingdom.

Various attempts have been made to read the Scottish double in light of other contexts. In the introduction to *Damage Land*, Bissett succinctly lists the variety of cultural contexts that have been used to explain the split psyche or double trope in Scottish society:

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[43] John Herdman, *The Double in Nineteenth Century Fiction* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1990), p. 16.

> Swathes have already been written about the contradictions involved in the Scottish character: caught between pride and servitude, Catholic and Protestant, the reality of urban labour and a dreamland of hills and heather, a low culture filled with tartan and lager and a high culture embarrassed by this, what Christopher Harvie calls the 'red' Scots (or Anglo-Scots) and the 'black' (those locked in the Kailyard).[44]

Cairns Craig argues that the split psyche paradigm participates not only in a Scottish literary tradition but also in a Scottish intellectual tradition, citing 'the work of the influential Scottish psychiatrist, R. D. Laing, whose book *The Divided Self* (1957) analyzes schizophrenia in relation to a conception of the self as developed in the work of the Scottish philosopher John Macmurray'.[45] In his collection of essays, *Scottish Literature: Character and Influence* (1919), G. Gregory Smith also argues that the 'combination of opposites' or 'zigzag of contradictions' is a distinctively Scottish characteristic which he famously calls 'the Caledonian antisyzygy'.[46] Positing an archetypal 'Scottish psyche', though, is necessarily speculation and it problematically equates nationality with personality and does not account for the many exceptions to the proposed archetype. Indeed, the range of attempts to explain the preponderance of the split psyche or double motif in Scottish literature in terms of a wider cultural context can sometimes resemble the desperate and contradictory conclusions of the medical specialists in 'The Spread of Ian Nicol':

> A German consultant said that life was freeing itself from the vicissitudes of sexual reproduction. A psychiatrist said it was a form of schizophrenia, a psycho-analyst

[44] Alan Bissett, '"The Dead Can Sing": An Introduction', in *Damage Land*, pp. 1-8 (p. 2).
[45] Craig, *Iain Banks's 'Complicity'*, p. 31.
[46] G. Gregory Smith, 'The Caledonian Antisyzygy', in *Scottish Literature in the Twentieth Century: An Anthology*, ed. by David McCordick (Dalkeith: Scottish Cultural Press, 2002) pp. 141-154 (p. 142).

> that it was an ordinary twinning process which had been delayed by a severe case of prenatal sibling rivalry.[47]

While speculation on the reasons behind the prevalence of the double in Scottish fiction may similarly fall short of convincing, however, it is enough for the purposes of this study that the trope remains a prominent feature of mainstream Scottish literature and art, and that the topic continues to be relevant to questions of Scottishness.

The constant collisions between fragments of Colley's narrative, narrated in the first-person, and fragments of the killer's narrative, narrated in the second-person, keep open the possibility for most of the novel that Colley himself is the killer, evoking an unusual noir set-up used in Joseph H. Lewis's *So Dark the Night* (1946). In *Complicity*, this possibility brings about a suggestive hesitation between interpretations that has attracted the attention of several critics. As Scott McCracken argues, 'This opposition of "You" and "I" destabilises the relationship between self and other to the point where the reader is unsure whether or not "You" is Cameron in another guise'.[48] On a first reading, most of the novel seems to suggest an interpretation in which Colley might be suffering from some form of split personality disorder, in which the deepest darkest desires of his everyday social persona are, unbeknownst to him, being acted out by his unbound alter ego. His conscious sympathies with the killer's mission, coupled with his suspicious movements at the times of the attacks, add further weight to this possibility. The second-person description of the violent attack on Mr Jemmel Azul in his plush villa

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[47] Gray, 'The Spread of Ian Nicol', p. 5.
[48] Scott McCracken, *Pulp: Reading Popular Fiction* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), p. 145.

in Jersey, for instance, tantalizingly takes place between the point when Colley falls asleep in his car outside the villa and the point when he wakes up, having been directed there by one of Mr Archer's leads. The section which follows the murder, separated by just an asterisk, suggestively begins 'I jolt awake with a bad taste in my mouth' (*C*, 168). On a first reading, such scenes are faintly reminiscent of the final chapter of Stevenson's *Jekyll and Hyde*, 'Henry Jekyll's Full Statement of the Case', in which Dr Jekyll recounts with horror that he has committed criminal acts, including murder, against his will while under the influence of his alter ego Edward Hyde.[49]

Colley's casual indulgence of alcohol and various potent recreational drugs, faintly reminiscent of Dr Jekyll's chemical vice, invite questions about the state of his mental health, further adding to the possibility of a divided personality. A remarkable indication of Colley's mental fragility occurs when he drunkenly experiences an optical illusion in an Edinburgh bar where the pub décor creates the impression that he is looking into a mirror but he is confused that he cannot see his own reflection:

> *things are not right*; I can see those bottles on the gallery ahead of me, and I can see their reflections behind them, but *I can't see me*! *I can't see my own reflection*! […] 'Help me Al,' I say. 'I'm going crazy or I've become a fucking vampire or something' […] One of the people in the mirror is looking at me. I realise I'm still pointing. I turn and look behind me but there's just a whole load of backs and bodies; nobody is looking at me. (*C*, 114-116)

[49] Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* [1886] (London: New English Paperbacks, 1974), pp. 113-115.

As well as demonstrating Colley's paranoia and potential psychological instability, this remarkable episode engages with the trope, commonly used in gothic and noir fiction, whereby mirrors, reflections, and shadows gesture towards the characters' dark alter egos and other selves. This motif is evident in the opening of Fritz Lang's noir film *The Big Heat* (1953), for instance, in which the inventive use of multiple mirrors serves to foreground various characters' obsessions with image, performance, and deception. The trope is taken to self-conscious extremes in the famous hall-of-mirrors scene at the end of Orson Welles's *Lady from Shanghai* (1947), where a room filled with cracked and distorting mirrors provides a visual representation of the endless re-doubling and re-splitting of the complex characters' images and personalities. An individual's reflection is an effective manifestation of their gothic double because it is at once them and not them, as in the striking images used in the passage from *Complicity* that opened this chapter: 'in that primaeval mirror of the soul […] something that was you and was not you'. For Colley to be seriously concerned that he has no reflection not only shows his fraught mental condition and alludes to *Dracula*, but his fears also participate in the novel's engagement with the double motif, suggesting that he is worried that his alter ego is unbound.

Further disorientation is heaped on as the novel playfully indulges in disturbing games in which it becomes difficult to separate the narrative's two main personas. There is a scene, for instance, that depicts Colley breaking into his girlfriend Yvonne's house in the middle of the night, dressed entirely in black, complete with leather gloves, a ski mask, and a hunting knife, and apparently raping

her (*C*, 125-130). Although this passage is narrated in the usual first-person narrative voice of the Colley sections, the violence, the emotional detachment, the ambiguity of motive, and the unknown identity of the assailant mean that it reads more like the sections that are focalized by the killer: 'I raise the blade so she can see it. She struggles, eyes widening further, but I pin her to the sheets with my weight and keep the glove firmly over her mouth even though she isn't making any noise' (*C*, 128). This expectation is given further plausibility by the fact that the killer used a black ski balaclava during the most recent murder (*C*, 102). Even when it transpires that Colley and Yvonne have pre-arranged this rape scenario as part of their elaborate sexual experimentation, the passage has already dangled the possibility that Colley and the killer are the two sides of the same person, and has at least raised questions about Colley's moral limits. In Gavin Millar's film adaptation of *Complicity* (2000), this scene uses the same style of point-of-view shots as the scenes focalized by the killer. Point-of-view shots simultaneously offer first-person and second-person perspectives. Without the necessity of switching between clearly distinct narrative voices, then, the film is able to indicate a deeper assimilation between Colley and the killer.

By the point that the novel reveals who "you" is, however, it is not too much of a surprise that the killer is Colley's childhood friend Andy. The novel's gesturing towards the possibility that "you" and "I" are both sides of the same person is more than an entertaining 'red herring', playing an important role in the novel's social and aesthetic strategies. Pointing to Colley's characterization of Andy as 'my old soul-mate, my surrogate brother, my other me' (*C*, 29), Cairns Craig astutely argues that

'The narrative technique, of course, tells a truth which the novel will unfold: Cameron and Andy are indeed two sides of the same personality'.[50] Indeed, this point is made evident in the novel by the use of the second-person narrative voice to refer to Colley, rather than Andy, in the final chapter when he recalls their visit to Mary King's Close, underlining Colley's feelings of complicity and the gothic intensity of the relationship between the two characters, a relationship which plays a central role in the novel's generic and national contexts.

The close relationship between Colley and Andy is intensified by intermittent flashbacks to Colley's childhood memories. The novel uses complex noirish structures where the flashbacks are not even arranged chronologically themselves, and there are flashbacks within flashbacks. The short analeptic passages throughout the novel gradually build up an emotionally engaging back-story between Colley and Andy, revealing the development of their tumultuous relationship. Colley has a flashback, for instance, to when they are in their early teens and they indulge in some homosexual experimentation in which the slightly older Andy, home from boarding school, persuades Colley to masturbate him (*C*, 196-198). The following flashback continues from this point, when a middle-aged stranger walks past and asks Andy 'What d'you think you were doing, eh? Answer me, boy!' before declaring that he is a policeman and brutally raping Andy, claiming it is a punishment for doing 'dirty, perverted things' (*C*, 232). Within this flashback, Colley experiences a further flashback, which has already been recounted earlier in the novel, to when Andy fell through the ice on a frozen lake and shouted to a petrified Colley to get a branch:

[50] Craig, *Iain Banks's 'Complicity'*, p. 54.

> I look down at what I tripped over; a fallen branch, about the size of a man's arm. I stare at it, thinking down the depth of years to that frozen day by the river.
>
> *Get a branch*.
>
> The scream again.
>
> *Get a branch*.
>
> I'm still staring at the branch; it's like my brain's screaming at me inside my own head and I don't know what else it is that's listening, except it *isn't* listening; my brain's screaming *Run*! *Run*! at me but the message isn't getting through, there's something else in the way, something else pulling me back, back to Andy and back to that frozen river bank; I hear Andy crying out and I can still see him reaching towards me and he's about to slip away from me again and I can't do anything … but I can, this time I can; I can do something and I will. (*C*, 238)

The phrase 'frozen day' is notable in this passage, because it interprets the past as a static and detached presence. This understanding of the past is completely contradicted by the events of the passage, however, as the past is revealed as an active, inescapable agency continually exerting its influence on the present. This dynamic, of course, extends to the present of the novel's main story, upon which the events of this flashback remain a decisive influence. Such uses of ambiguous and suggestive chronological structures are common in film noir, foregrounding questions of determinism and existentialism. In the flashback, the teenage Andy somehow conflates the two incidents and now fetches a large branch with which he and Andy proceed to beat the stranger to death, before dragging his corpse through the woods and pushing it over the edge of an old air-shaft chimney above a disused railway tunnel. This chimney is an old childhood haunt of theirs that was described in an earlier flashback: 'You could climb up onto them and sit on the rusting iron grid – afraid it would give way but afraid to admit you were afraid – and look down into that utter blackness, and sometimes catch the cold, dead scent of the abandoned tunnel' (*C*, 46). This sentence notably uses a second-person narrative voice in the

more conventional, innocent way, reflecting an everyday conversational habit, and this image of darkness as one of inexplicable terror is obviously echoed in Colley's later memories of visiting Mary King's Close. It is this dark secret from their childhood that has bound Colley and Andy together throughout their lives, and which echoes through the events of the novel's principal story. This image of characters being haunted by their pasts, perpetually looming, waiting to catch up with them, is a key trope in both gothic and noir fiction.

The novel's hesitation between interpretations about the double motif, fluctuating between one person with two personalities, or two people who represent different sides of the same personality, is in keeping with classic Scottish gothic fiction's use of the double in the novels *Justified Sinner* and *Jekyll and Hyde*. In this way, Colley and Andy function as an archetypal gothic double. Colley consistently presents himself as left-wing, pacifist, and anti-Thatcher: 'I'm a journalist; cynical and hard-bitten and all that shit and I do drugs and I drive too fast and I hate the Tories and all their accomplices, but I'm not a fucking *murderer*, for Christ's sake' (C, 110). The basic details of Andy's life, on the other hand, suggest that he is Colley's mirror opposite. In his narration, Colley reveals that Andy joined the British Army but left after being seriously wounded in a botched operation while serving as a lieutenant during the Falklands conflict. He was awarded a DSO, which he sent back 'when the officer who'd been in charge of the attack was kicked upstairs instead of being court-martialled' (*C*, 77). Andy carries echoes of the post-war American film noir stock character type of a physically wounded, psychologically disturbed army veteran returning from armed combat overseas,

mistreated by the institution, and unable to readjust to civilian life. Examples of this stock character type can be found in George Marshall's *The Blue Dahlia* (1946) and Edward Dmytryk's *Crossfire* (1947). Using a quintessential noir style, Robert Aldrich's war film *Attack!* (1956) provides a good parallel to the specific aspect of *Complicity* in question, since it exposes the psychological horrors of careerism and nepotism in the United States army during the Second World War, depicting a cowardly and incompetent captain receiving promotion in place of court-martial. After the army, Andy then had a successful career working for a big London advertising company, before starting his own exceedingly lucrative business. The unexpected death of Andy's sister Clare, as a result of a locum doctor's negligence, was the tipping point in a psychological crisis:

> He became quiet, then reclusive, and bought a big, old decaying hotel in the western Highlands and retired to live there alone, practically broke apparently and still not really doing anything apart from drinking too much […] walking in the hills, and just lying in bed sleeping while the hotel – in a quiet, dark village that was busy once, before they built a new road and the ferry service stopped – crumbles quietly around him. (*C*, 77-78)

Echoes of Poe's 'The Fall of the House of Usher' (1839) can be discerned in the fact that Andy's sister plays such an important role in his break-down, especially given the childhood friendship between the two main characters and the image of Andy wasting away in a gothic mansion of sorts. Reading the details of Andy's life as a manifestation of wider socio-political conditions, the implication seems to be that Andy has become increasingly disillusioned with the values of Thatcherite Britain and eventually become a gothic recluse, an implication that is played up in characterizations of him in the novel as an 'archetypal 'eighties player and then

victim' (*C*, 76) or a 'dissolute 'eighties boom-victim moping in his gloomy mansion' (*C*, 120). With the intertwined trajectories of their lives, and with their propensity to act as the two conflicting sides of one personality, Colley and Andy function as an archetypal modern gothic pairing of characters. Comparing them to pairings such as Marlow and Kurtz, or Carraway and Gatsby, Cairns Craig explains that 'one of the two paired characters goes beyond the bounds of ordinary experience, and one remains just within the boundary, able to see into the abyss but remaining behind to tell the tale of the other's unspeakable experience'.[51] Another revealing, though admittedly less extreme, example of such a gothic pairing would be Sherlock Holmes and Doctor Watson from the novels and stories by the Edinburgh-born writer Arthur Conan Doyle. Craig's description of such pairings is especially relevant to Colley and Andy, both emphasizing the intensity and oppositional nature of their relationship and foregrounding the act of narration itself. Indeed, having become disillusioned with Thatcherism and psychologically damaged by his experiences, Andy now shares many of the same views as Colley but is capable of acting out the kind of vigilante violence Colley can only vicariously indulge through semi-ironic newspaper columns.

This kind of dynamic between the characters is evident elsewhere in the novel too. Colley becomes infatuated with a 'Byzantinely complicated, baroquely beautiful, spectacularly immoral and utterly, utterly addictive' video game called *Despot*, which seems to be a fictionalized version of the popular video game *Civilization* (1991), in which the player takes on the persona of a ruthless empire-builder and engages in computer simulations of warfare and imperialism (*C*, 51).

[51] Craig, *Iain Banks's 'Complicity'*, p. 63.

The player completes the game by destroying all other civilizations. It is a game that Colley takes very seriously, becoming infuriated at his wasted man-hours when he returns to the game and finds that it has been left running, leaving his simulated empire a wasteland: 'The city is crumbling, largely abandoned; aqueducts fallen, reservoirs cracked and dry, districts flooded, others burned down […] The countryside has either become desert or marsh or returned to forest; huge areas are barren' (*C*, 261). Colley's addiction to such a game, though he is utterly opposed to warfare and imperialism in real life, is very suggestive, especially in the context of the novel's vicarious aesthetic strategy of forcing the reader into the position of a serial killer. Andy has embraced armed combat in reality, even arguing that it is a situation in which 'some people do rise above themselves' (*C*, 297), but Colley is only able to engage fully with warfare in the safe, simulated environment of the video game. He reveals that he was initially excited to be sent to the real-life wasteland that is Basra Road to do some war reportage during the Persian Gulf War of the early 1990s, but found the reality of the situation too much to bear:

> I was given the chance to do my stuff and show what I was made of, to be a genuine front-line journalist, a rootin-tootin-tokin-tipplin God-bijayzuz gonzo war correspondent, bringing the blessed Saint Hunter's manic subjectivity to the ultimate in scarifying human edge-work: modern warfare […] I couldn't do it; couldn't hack it as a hack; I just stood there, awestruck, horrorstruck, absorbing the ghastly force of it […] I was reduced to a numb, dumb realisation of our unboundedly resourceful talent for bloody hatred and mad waste, but stripped of the means to describe and present that knowledge. (*C*, 290)

Though the force of his political convictions is the stronger and more consistent, then, Colley is unable to act on these convictions as directly and radically as Andy. In the actions of his lifelong friend, both in armed combat and in the gruesome acts

of violence he perpetrates, Colley is confronted with the disturbing realisation of dark desires and unacknowledged fantasies that he obliquely indulges from sanitized positions of safety. The relationship between the characters foregrounds the disturbing vicarious dynamic between the novel and its reader. Through its complex and innovative negotiation of the conventions and expectations arising from its national and generic contexts, then, *Complicity* provides a gothic configuration of modernity that has deep and intricate resonances in a Scottish cultural context.

Louise Welsh

A number of striking parallels in theme, form, and content can be drawn between *Complicity* and Louise Welsh's outstanding debut novel *The Cutting Room*. Welsh is something of an exception in contemporary crime fiction because she does not write within the standard series format, or use recurring characters and settings. It is also true that none of her novels are straightforward examples of crime fiction, teetering as they do on the outer limits of the genre. Indeed, in an interview conducted for the purposes of this thesis, Welsh admitted that there were a lot of things she found 'repugnant' about crime fiction.[52] Following in the tradition of William McIlvanney's crime fiction, discussed in the first chapter of this thesis, Welsh's participation in crime fiction is therefore deeply ambivalent, using the conventions of the genre in order to critique its values, assumptions, and pleasures. All of Welsh's novels do, however, involve aspects of the genre such as mystery, investigation, violence, conspiracy, and crime itself. Since they do not use the stock character types or the narrative patterns expected in crime fiction, however, gothic

[52] Louise Welsh, interviewed by Christopher Kydd, Unpublished, 21 March 2012.

and noir are perhaps more helpful generic identifications of her novels than simply crime. Of all Welsh's work, *The Cutting Room* is the most relevant to this chapter because it best corresponds with the kind of gothic formulations of modernity that are invoked in *Complicity*, and it demonstrates a similar confluence of artistic and national contexts.

Given the general significance of her work to this chapter, however, it is worthwhile briefly outlining her subsequent novels. Set in Elizabethan London, *Tamburlaine Must Die* (2004) is the furthest removed from the field of contemporary Scottish crime fiction of all her works. On the question of Scottishness, however, she suggests that her novels set outside Scotland are equally Scottish but points out that the sense of cultural Scottishness in her work is less the product of conscious aspiration, and more a by-product of her being Scottish.[53] *Tamburlaine Must Die* takes the form of a document written by the playwright Christopher Marlowe, relating the last two days of his life. There is a surprisingly modern, suspenseful texture to the novel, however, facilitated by the reader's awareness of Marlowe's impending murder from the outset. Indeed, the sense of indeterminate menace that is conjured by the vague rumours and accusations that are levelled at him, and by the way that he is frequently summoned before courts and shadowy figures without explanation, has a certain Kafkaesque quality. The narrative structure that the novella uses, in which the end is already determined, is one that is frequently found in classic noir films. This structure effectively accommodates the mode's fundamental concern with the tension between deterministic and existential worldviews. One especially pertinent example is

[53] Louise Welsh, interviewed by Christopher Kydd, Unpublished, 21 March 2012.

Rudolph Maté's *D.O.A.* (1950), in which the protagonist is told that he has been fatally poisoned and he frantically uses his remaining time to investigate his own murder. Elements of the gothic are naturally involved in *Tamburlaine Must Die* too, again emerging most effectively in scenes that foreshadow Marlowe's fate, such as when he winces at 'the slack grins of the severed heads' on the spikes on Tower Bridge, or when, in an ironic act of Faustian arrogance, he publicly blasphemes: 'I raised my cup and felt all-powerful, cursing Christ and his vengeful father'.[54] The work ends on a bitter, unresolved note that fits well with the contexts of this chapter: 'If these are the last words that I write, let them be, A Curse on Man and God' (*TMD*, 140).

Welsh's subsequent novel *The Bullet Trick* (2006) is more obviously in the territory of contemporary Scottish crime fiction. Its main character is a Glaswegian magician called William Wilson, a name borrowed from Poe's 1839 gothic tale. In a neat display of narrative sleight-of-hand, the novel moves back and forth chronologically as well as geographically between Glasgow, London, and Berlin. The novel's use of Berlin, which mainly centres on decadent nightclubs, burlesque theatres, and sleazy strip-joints, obliquely evokes noir's roots in German expressionism and Weimar cinema. Like *Complicity* and The *Cutting Room*, *The Bullet Trick* explores how displaced forms of violence and sexual exploitation often disturbingly underlie certain aesthetic pleasures, such as William's sensational conjuring tricks and indeed the often dubious pleasures of the crime genre. Welsh's *Naming the Bones* (2010) is a kind of gothic mystery narrative which revolves

[54] Louise Welsh, *Tamburlaine Must Die* [2004] (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2005), p. 39, p. 73. Subsequent references to this text will use this edition with the page numbers indicated in parenthesis.

around a middle-aged academic called Dr Murray Watson, often playfully referred to as simply Dr Watson. The character is on sabbatical researching his planned literary biography of a little-known Scottish poet Archie Lunan who has supposedly committed suicide. Centring on a relatively passive, introverted character, *Naming the Bones* has a slower pace than Welsh's earlier novels, but it all gradually contributes to an impressive high gothic climax on the remote Island of Lismore. As Susan Mansfield's review of the novel puts it, 'she pulls out all the stops: the dark and stormy night; the soon-to-be excavated burial ground; the isolated island; the suicidal companion; the overtones of Celtic myth'.[55] Indeed, the novel's well-executed juxtaposition between the urban Scotland of Edinburgh and Glasgow and the rural Scotland of Lismore is particularly notable in the context of Scottish gothic. This corroborates Ian Duncan's argument, discussed earlier, that Scottish gothic revolves around the two divergent modern and ancestral modes of Scottishness. Echoing aspects of both *The Bullet Trick* and *Naming the Bones*, Welsh's most recent novel *The Girl on the Stairs* (2012) is a gothic suspense story set in Berlin, about a pregnant woman called Jane who is drawn into investigating a mystery involving a young, possibly-endangered girl who lives in the same apartment block as her.

It is *The Cutting Room* that provides the most fitting case study for this chapter, however. It elaborates similar anxieties about aesthetics and exploitation as those explored in *Complicity*, and it also brings together aspects of gothic and noir in such a way that they are smoothly integrated with the emphases of Scottish fiction.

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[55] Susan Mansfield, 'Book Review: *Naming the Bones*', *Scotsman*, 2 March 2010 <http://living.scotsman.com/books/Book-review-Naming-the-Bones.6111131.jp> [accessed 22 September 2012].

Like *Complicity*, *The Cutting Room* inventively uses the tropes of gothic, noir, and detective fiction to implicate the reader in the criminal transgressions involved in the narrative, and to explore the limits of taste in art and literature. These well-worn genres provide a familiar structure in which to contain the more challenging, open-ended, and uncomfortable elements of the narrative. Conversely, however, these darker, more artistic aspects are also arguably accentuated when housed within the structures of popular forms that routinely deal with murder, exploitation, and abuse in a sanitized, perfunctory way. While the forms that *The Cutting Room* appropriates are not Scottish in origin or by association, the novel does give them a Scottish inflection. The Scottish setting is more than incidental and the text participates meaningfully in discourses of recent Scottish fiction. Indeed, the use of these non-indigenous and arguably internationally-homogenized models actually serves to exfoliate aspects of Scottishness.

The novel's primary narrative revolves around the investigation of crime, but surprisingly few of the generic expectations of detective fiction are fulfilled. The protagonist Rilke, for instance, is not a professional investigator of any kind but an antiques expert and auctioneer. In contrast to the aggressively masculine, hard-boiled detectives discussed in this thesis's first chapter, Rilke also stands out in terms of the genre because he is homosexual. Welsh claims that her use of a homosexual detective, and her inclusion of several explicit sex scenes, was not only a reaction to the trademark homophobia of the genre but also 'a big fuck-off to Brian Soutar', the Scottish co-founder of the Stagecoach Group who donated one million pounds of his own personal wealth to the homophobic 'Keep the Clause' campaign

in 2000.[56] Given the long history of crime fiction aligning homosexuality with the criminal other, in terms of villainy or psychosis, however, what is perhaps most remarkable is that Rilke's sexuality is not a central feature of the novel in either a traditional or revisionist way. Indeed, the plot pivots on a far less conventional orientation of desire. While cataloguing the contents of an imposing gothic mansion belonging to a deceased elderly gentleman named Mr McKindless, Rilke is compelled to investigate when he comes across a series of deeply unsettling photographs. Alongside some violent pornographic images in which McKindless himself appears, the sordid collection includes what seems to be several horrific torture and snuff photographs created in Paris in the 1960s, all featuring the same young girl. Obsessed with establishing whether they are genuine or posed, Rilke embarks on a quest to determine the provenance of these disturbing images. He is warned off the case several times and begins to regard it as a futile exercise but, as much as he tries to forget about it, he becomes psychologically haunted by the content of the photos and what they reveal about the dark side of human desire. Throughout his unofficial investigation, the images and their wider implications are continually given renewed relevance by Rilke's encounters with the people and places that become involved in the narrative.

In the only article on *The Cutting Room* to date, Gavin Miller examines its representation of aesthetic depersonalization, arguing that Welsh's novel is 'part of a strand of post-war Scottish writing that focuses on the phenomenology of personal relations, and on how, in particular, other people may be depersonalized rather than

[56] Louise Welsh, interviewed by Christopher Kydd, Unpublished, 21 March 2012. See also 'Souter to bank-roll clause referendum', *BBC News*, 28 March 2000 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/scotland/693172.stm> [accessed 22 September 2012].

encountered in an "I-thou" relationship'.[57] Elaborating what he means by this 'strand of Scottish writing', Miller astutely reads *The Cutting Room* alongside other Scottish texts such as Toni Davidson's *Scar Culture* (1999), Zoe Strachan's *Negative Space* (2002), the novels of Alasdair Gray, and the work of Scottish psychologist R. D. Laing. Miller's use of Laing is particularly notable in the context of Scottish literature, since Laing posits that inter-personal relations are characterized by a kind of doubling of interpretation, involving a fluctuation between seeing other humans as people with their own consciousness and viewing them merely as objects.[58] This fluctuation has obvious implications for crime fiction, since murder victims are transformed from humans to corpses, and criminals are frequently regarded as inhuman. It is particularly relevant to *Complicity* and *The Cutting Room*, since both novels involve aesthetic exploitation and characters who become dehumanized to varying degrees. Miller's reading demonstrates how *The Cutting Room*, although perhaps not a self-consciously Scottish text, interacts meaningfully with concerns that are present in Scottish writing. His argument that the novel uses 'photography as a metaphor for depersonalized experience' also helpfully contextualizes two Scottish crime films: David Hayman's stylish neo-noir *The Near Room* (1995), in which a burnt-out journalist frenetically investigates a child pornography ring in Glasgow that has inveigled his own daughter, and Andrea Arnold's deeply disturbing *Red Road* (2006), which revolves around a socially-isolated female CCTV operator working for Glasgow City Council surveying the Red Road flats, whose anomic life

[57] Gavin Miller, 'Aesthetic Depersonalization in Louise Welsh's *The Cutting Room*', *Journal of Narrative Theory*, 36.1 (2006), 72-89 (p. 72).
[58] R. D. Laing, *The Divided Self: An Existential Study in Sanity and Madness* [1965] (London: Penguin, 1990), p. 21.

is experienced largely through screens.[59] These films provide further examples of Scottish crime narratives that approach aspects of modernity with a sense of profound gothic anxiety.

Bearing Miller's incisive discussion of *The Cutting Room* within its national context in mind, it is fitting to explore the novel's equally significant generic context at this juncture because it raises similar themes and concerns. Indeed, the theme of 'photography as a metaphor for depersonalized experience' has its precedents in the crime genre with modernist noirs like Michael Powell's *Peeping Tom* (1960) and Michelangelo Antonioni's *Blow-Up* (1966). Welsh's novel aligns itself with noir both in terms of self-consciously adopting the mannerisms and iconography of the mode and its offering of a gothic reading of modernity. These elements are evident, for instance, in Rilke's description of arriving at Bowery Auctions:

> The last shades of light were fading into grey, night beginning to veil the park-land. I thought of my boyhood when chemicals foamed the Clyde and every sunset had been a tainted, pyrotechnic blaze […] It had started to rain; water dripped into the well at the bottom of the ancient elevator shaft. I hailed the lift and listened to the clamber of clattering chains as it descended. The tired grille creaked as a hand from within concertinaed it back.[60]

The descriptions of the unnatural light patterns comply with the dark and oneiric sensibilities of gothic and noir, and the reference to the Clyde's notorious pollution subtly emphasizes Glasgow as city acutely shaped by industrialization and de-industrialization. An elevator is typically a signifier of modernity, conjuring up images of skyscrapers, twentieth-century urban life, and mechanization. Indeed, a

[59] Miller, 'Aesthetic Depersonalization', p. 72.
[60] Louise Welsh, *The Cutting Room* [2002] (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2003), p. 10. Subsequent references to this text will use this edition with the page numbers indicated in parenthesis.

later passage in the novel refers to the fact Glasgow had 'Elevator buildings that inspired the Chicago skyline' (*TCR*, 65). This specific elevator, however, is marked by unwholesome noises, leaks, and decay, rendering it a rather archaic gothic contraption. Images of this kind of outmoded, open-cage elevator are also frequently used in classic noir, such as in the final scene of John Huston's *The Maltese Falcon* (1941), itself echoed in Stephen Frears's inventive neo-noir *The Grifters* (1990). Such elevators prove particularly effective in the context of noir as the grill pattern divides the screen and the actors' faces unnaturally, fitting in with the mode's expressionist aesthetic and suggesting feelings of captivity and fragmented selves.

The use of narration in *The Cutting Room* also appropriates the noir style. It is narrated mostly in the standard first-person, past-tense narrative voice. In the manner of the archetypal film noir voice-over, however, it is narrated retrospectively from some unspecified point in the future and therefore the narration continually gestures beyond the present of the novel, infusing the events with a sense of dread and fatality. This form of narrative determinism is evident, for instance, in an early scene when Rilke is first commissioned by Mr McKindless's sister to take care of his estate:

> 'I want it done quick.'
> Blue eyes that used to be bluer looking straight at me.
> I should have stopped right there and asked her why, but I was already making calculations in my head, adding up time, manpower and money, wheeling straight into business as she knew I would [...] She was selling the heirlooms too fast, too cheap. It should have smelt wrong but my senses were overwhelmed. I kept right on going, as pleased as Aladdin when he first rubbed that lamp and discovered his Genie. (*TCR*, 5-9)

Rilke ruefully suggests that his lust for money and fetish for rare antiques will subsequently lead him into danger. In terms of the dual time-frame and the obsessive narrator, this style recalls that of hard-boiled narratives such as *Double Indemnity*. It is helpful to examine this complex narrative strategy using a scene from James M. Cain's novella as a point of comparison. The narrator, an insurance salesman named Walter Huff, disrupts his chronological recounting of the story to offer hints of the looming danger towards which he is heading. Like Rilke, Walter similarly laments his rational, conservative impulses being over-taken by a conflation of reckless sexual desire and financial greed, after sultry trophy wife Phyllis enquires about taking out secret accident insurance for her elderly, disabled husband:

> I couldn't be mistaken about what she meant, not after fifteen years in the insurance business. I mashed out my cigarette, so I could get up and go. I was going to get out of there, and drop those renewals and everything else about her like a red-hot poker. But I didn't do it […] I ought to quit while the quitting was good, I knew that. But that thing was in me, pushing me closer to the edge.[61]

True to the noir form, Wilder's film adaptation renders these aspects in an even more sensational and baroque fashion. Further elaborating the fundamental noir theme of determinism, the film appends a framing-narrative in which the wounded and dying protagonist, played by Fred MacMurray, retrospectively narrates the events into a tape-recorder, a structure that emphasizes his position as a helpless character caught in the mechanisms of a plot outwith his control. The film also ups the erotic qualities of the characters' first encounter, presenting Barbara Stanwyck's Phyllis wearing only a towel and featuring a later sequence in which Walter

[61] James M. Cain, *Double Indemnity* [1936] (London: Orion, 2002), pp. 13-16.

fetishistically fantasizes about her anklet as she descends the stairs. While the above example from *The Cutting Room* is not erotic, it equally conveys the character's obsessive nature, presenting him as a character also apparently in thrall to forms of psychological and narrative determinism. Unusually for a written passage, it also exemplifies the kind of ironic off-screen voice-over narration associated with film noir, in the sense that it creates an audio counterpoint that ironizes, rather than complements, the visual image. Narrated in present-tense and given its own paragraph, the image of 'Blue eyes that used to be bluer', which is presented as a discrete visual unit akin to a cinematic shot, portrays McKindless's sister as a trusting, vulnerable elderly lady. There is an ironic fissure, however, between this impression of her and that which is suggested by the phrase 'as she knew I would'. This phrase gestures beyond the present events, obliquely revealing the narrator's future awareness that her eagerness to sell her brother's heirlooms and her apparent vulnerability, which he is keen to exploit at the time, are calculated postures designed to misdirect his attention.

Not only does *The Cutting Room* evoke noir in its treatment of time and approach to narration, expressing a sense of modernist dislocation, but, like noir, it also offers a thoroughgoing gothic reading of modernity. Indeed, the novel is more intensely gothic and more explicitly engaged with aspects of modernity than many archetypal examples of noir. Like *Complicity*, it rejects the traditional grand narrative of progress, suggesting that aspects of modernity such as technology, capitalism, and globalization, despite creating the conditions for international integration and a free market, also herald a re-emergence of barbarism in the forms

of alienation, exploitation, violence, depersonalization, and commodity fetishism. These crises of modernity are inflected with gothic sensibilities and gothic narrative strategies throughout. The novel's central conceit, an obsessive investigation into the provenance of potential snuff photographs, encapsulates its intermingling of gothic and modernity perfectly. Photography is a distinctly modern phenomenon, exemplifying modernity's preoccupations with visual culture and evidence, but it can also be regarded, especially in the way that it is used in *The Cutting Room*, as an uncanny technology. As Susan Sontag puts it, 'Photographs are perhaps the most mysterious of all the objects that make up, and thicken, the environment we recognise as modern'.[62] Indeed, this sense of mysteriousness in such a distinctly modern medium makes photography an ideal form for revelling in the 'social fantastic'. Metaphorically, a photograph can function in a similar way to the gothic use of mirrors discussed earlier in this chapter, providing a visual form of doubling which, in a medium marked by authenticity, highlights deception, illusion, and the characters' alter egos.

The protagonist and narrator Rilke is a fundamentally modern presence in the novel, being a cynical and isolated character akin to the archetypal hard-boiled investigator. His initial reaction to the horrific photographs demonstrates this dimension of the character. When he finally discovers the first snuff photo in Mr McKindless's collection, there is a disturbingly protracted passage in which he intimately interprets the contents of the photo in remarkable detail:

[62] Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (London: Penguin, 2002), pp. 3-4.

> The same girl, still naked, lies on a wooden pallet. Hanging on the wall behind her is a hessian sheet. It has been put there to act as a backdrop, but falls short of the edge of the frame, exposing a rough brick wall. I stare at the photo for quite a while. The woman has been cruelly treated. There are the raised marks of a whipping on her stomach and thighs. Her ankles, calves and knees are bound with bristly rope which digs into her flesh. Her hands are tight behind her back, presumably secured. She lies slightly on her right side, towards the camera […] Her head lolls backwards. She is still the whitest thing I ever saw but I can distinguish her features now, distorted, ghastly. Pupils unfocussed and far back in her head, a mouth that ended with a scream. Her throat has been cut. Blood flows from her wound, slicks its way across the pallet and drips onto the floor. I wonder if it stains the photographer's boots. (*TCR*, 35-36)

The shift from past-tense to present-tense for this passage is a further manipulation of time in the novel. Assuming Rilke is correct in his estimation about when the pictures were taken, the content of the photograph in question existed long before any of the other events described in the novel. Even in his retrospective narration, however, his encounter with this photograph is presented in a much more immediate way than his recollection of the events of his own life. This urgency reflects not only the chilling content of the image but perhaps also expresses something about the medium itself. As Rilke later reflects, 'I could see her eyes, her torn throat, but I couldn't reach through the celluloid and touch her' (*TCR*, 132). Photography's capabilities for accuracy and authenticity become rather horrendous in the context of this photo. There is a strange tension between this propensity for accuracy and the fact that, perhaps more so than any other medium, photography also provokes a certain frisson in the viewer with regard to the mysterious circumstances of the photo's creation and with regard to what the frame elects not to show. As one character in *The Cutting Room* comments, 'That's the thing about pictures, they hint at more than they show. You might see a shadowy figure lurking round a corner, but you can never go round that corner and discover who it is' (*TCR*, 82). This kind of

frisson is well-illustrated by Rilke's idiosyncratic curiosity about the relatively inconsequential matter of whether the photographer's boots became bloodstained.

Despite the use of present-tense in his initial engagement with the photograph, though, Rilke's tone is strangely distant and coldly analytical. He describes a plethora of lurid detail, right down to the coarse texture of the rope and the badly framed hessian backcloth, but gives little indication that the image has provoked an emotional reaction of any kind within him. Indeed, in the immediate aftermath of what should be an unsettling discovery, Rilke's response seems to be closer to one of modern, existential anomie, akin to that exemplified by Meursault in Albert Camus's *The Outsider* (1942):

> My mind was completely empty […] I was tired of people. I took my baccy and rolled myself another cigarette […] I sat and smoked in silence. Then, though I didn't feel like it, looked at the photographs again. Were they real? They felt authentic, but that meant nothing. (*TCR*, 36)

Rilke's immediate engagement with the snuff photograph, then, does not exhibit the expected signs of shock, disgust, or outrage. Rather, he first appears to examine it in a meticulous, thorough, almost fixated way, as if mechanically weighing it up as an aesthetic item in the fashion that he is accustomed to scrutinizing antiques and collectables. Even his speculation about their authenticity plays into this impression. Rilke's response to the photo perhaps confirms Roland Barthes's argument that the prevalence of photographic images in modern, developed societies engenders a certain sense of alienation and displacement in its subjects:

> What characterizes the so-called advanced societies is that they today consume images and no longer, like those of the past, beliefs; they are therefore more liberal, less fanatical, but also more 'false' (less 'authentic') – something we translate, in ordinary consciousness, by the avowal of an impression of nauseated boredom.[63]

Although Rilke does not experience an immediate, instinctive reaction to the photographs, they nevertheless have a profound effect on him, emerging in the form of nightmares, obsessions, neuroses, abuses of alcohol and drugs, and casual sexual encounters with strangers.

One lurid and disturbing chapter 'The Worm on the Bud' brings several of these aspects together. After voyeuristically spying on a young man getting changed in his apartment from a bar across the street, Rilke goes over and propositions him, which the man accepts. They barely speak to one another during their encounter and there is even a sense of hostility between them. As they are having sex, Rilke finds himself unwillingly afflicted by macabre fantasies involving the content of the photograph which take the form of cinematic hallucinations:

> I didn't want to hear any talking now, just to see the images flashing in my head […] I imagined myself in this movie I'd seen … raping this boy … taking him against his will […] It was coming now … getting close … blood-red vision of the orgasm blackout … here it came … a wound, red and deep and longing … the dark basement … the slash of blood across her throat … the reflection imposed on the inside of my retina as true as if I was looking at the photograph … the girl, used and bound, lying dead on her pallet. I came, spurting into him, grasping his buttocks for support, rocking with the force of my orgasm. (TCR, 152-153)

This montage-like passage depicts Rilke's deep, dark inner-world through a collision of discrete visual units. Through the specific ways that these images are clashed together, the passage is able to suggest that character has developed some sort of

[63] Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, trans. by Richard Howard (London: Vintage, 2000), pp. 118-119.

deep-seated, perverse fixation with the snuff photograph. Linked by the compositional elements of shape and colour, a graphic match is created between Rilke's current sexual experience and his visual memory of the murdered girl in the photo, the two apparently becoming conflated in his head. It is notable that Rilke even experiences these deep-rooted inner fantasies at one remove, mediated through a cinematic system of representation. This mediation echoes his displaced relation to the content of the photograph on discovering it, which itself is further mirrored in the relationship between the reader and Rilke's response to the photo. There are further passages that reveal the increasingly fragility of Rilke's mental state as a result of finding the photographs, such as a scene in *The Cutting Room* where Rilke fails to recognize his own reflection: 'The man of three days ago was gone, in his place a troubled spectre' (*TCR*, 167). This image recalls the scene from *Complicity* in which Colley is convinced that he has no reflection, and also the aforementioned line from the opening chapter of *Laidlaw*: 'You could see who people thought was you in the mottled glass'. There is another revealing moment in *The Cutting Room* when Rilke, like Colley in the passage that opens this chapter, finds himself gripped by a deep-seated irrational fear that contradicts his otherwise modern, cynical personality:

> I woke in the middle of the night. There was someone in my room. I knew it as sure as I knew I was alive. I lay still, convinced that if I reached out to turn on the light, a clammy hand with a grip like iron would grab my wrist. Into the silence broke the sound of breathing. I cried out loud and lunged for the lamp. It toppled and as it fell light cast about the room, revealing no one. I lay back on the pillows, listening to the sound of my own staggered breath. (*TCR*, 255)

Like the passage from *Complicity*, Rilke's delayed and displaced reaction to the horror of the photograph illustrates what Ian Duncan sees as the defining feature of Scottish gothic: 'the uncanny recursion of an ancestral identity alienated from modern life'. Instead of experiencing an instinctive, unaffected reaction of revulsion or anger, as his pre-modern ancestors would have done, Rilke suffers a more protracted, compulsive and neurotic response thanks to his very modern rational and cynical sensibilities.

In terms of the crime genre, the photograph that drives *The Cutting Room* is a fascinating prop. It is not only a clue that provides evidence about the crime, but the creation and acquirement of the photo is also the motive behind the crime, a motive with which Rilke, at least unconsciously, seems to identify. Indeed, when Rilke shows the photos to Trapp, a suggestively-named German pornographer, in an attempt to verify their authenticity, their exchange is a revealing moment in the novel:

> 'What you really want to know is was a young girl murdered for sexual gratification and her corpse photographed?'
> 'Yes.'
> 'I would say almost certainly not.' My face must have registered surprise at his quick response, he laughed. 'You're disappointed! I have spoilt your mystery.' (*TCR*, 72)

Although he is joking, Trapp might have a valid point. Establishing the authenticity and provenance of the photographs has become something of an obsessive quest for Rilke by this point. Trapp's final remark is also equally applicable at a non-diegetic level: such a confirmation that the photos were posed would not only spoil the mystery for Rilke, but also for the reader. Like *Complicity*, *The Cutting Room* is

using its generic trappings to implicate the reader in the narrative's crime. The novel self-reflexively points out that in choosing to read a gothic crime novel, the reader is, in some sense, necessarily complicit with the crimes represented in the narrative.

The impressive range of literary references used in *The Cutting Room* contributes further to this sense of the reader's complicity. The chapters are prefaced with excerpts from works by poets such as John Keats, William Wordsworth, Edgar Allan Poe, Paul Verlaine, and Arthur Rimbaud. Paul Magrs's review of novel sees these literary quotations as a kind of unnecessary arty allusiveness that detracts from an otherwise compelling novel:

> It's less successful when it gets self-consciously literary and chimes off Girodias or Foucault, or presents its tombstone chapter epigraphs to lend some clout. The book doesn't need these kind of paperweights. There's a lovely weightiness here already; the real immediate flesh, tantalisingly apparent under the make-up of convention.[64]

However, these references serve a key purpose in the novel's aesthetic strategies. In the context of a morbid crime narrative concerning repugnant sexual violence, they perhaps initially legitimize the reader's intellectual and emotional engagement with the novel. They demonstrate, moreover, that the snuff photographs, nasty and lurid though they may be, might be seen as one contemporary manifestation of a tendency that has a long history in respectable art and literature. The quotation from Poe's 'Introduction' (1831), which prefaces the chapter in which Rilke first discovers the photo, is especially effective in regard to both these functions:

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[64] Paul Magrs, 'More Tease, Less Strip', *Guardian*, 31 August 2002 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2002/aug/31/featuresreviews.guardianreview18> [accessed 22 September 2010].

> I could love except where Death
> Was mingling his with Beauty's breath. (*TCR*, 34)

Indeed, a character in the novel, Derek, a young man who works in Trapp's shop, describes the horrific photograph as being 'right slap bang in the tradition of Western art', before misquoting a famous line from Poe's 'The Philosophy of Composition' (1846): 'The death of a beautiful woman is the most beautiful thing in the world' (*TCR*, 80). The poetic allusions used in the novel, then, demonstrate how traditional gothic content can become intensified in the contexts of modernity. The contemporary cosmopolitan urban setting, in which, despite advances in technology and communications, the characters lead increasingly lonely, displaced lives, actually seems to facilitate the inflated re-emergence of horrors apparently consigned to a remote and barbaric past.

In terms of *The Cutting Room*'s allusions to Scottish fiction, there are inevitable references to *Jekyll and Hyde*, a quotation from which is used as a chapter preface, and a nod to *Justified Sinner* in the sly naming of a pub: Gilmartin's. The subtle, embedded allusions to more recent works of Scottish fiction that appear throughout the novel successfully work to situate the novel in a context of contemporary Scottish gothic. Welsh's use of the name 'McKindless' perhaps obliquely recalls that of the protagonist Archie McCandless from Alasdair Gray's *Poor Things*. Gray's novel is set in Victorian Glasgow and is a sort of adaptation of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) but with strong overtones of Hogg's *Justified Sinner* and Stevenson's *The Master of Ballantrae* (1889), in terms of its narrative structure and emphasis on duality. James Whales's high-camp atmospheric horror sequel *The Bride of Frankenstein* (1935) also looms large in the novel's intertextual

structure. Following the story of a man who falls in love with a woman who has apparently been assembled from the body of a suicidal woman and her stillborn daughter's brain, *Poor Things* is an appropriate reference point for *The Cutting Room* as it also involves bodily horror, sinister sexual desire, and black humour in an identifiably Scottish setting. In both cases, too, the central mystery of the novel is left open-ended. The change to 'McKindless' is interesting in itself. The 'kindless' portion renders the character as an aberration to the human race, in that he is both without kind and lacking kindness. The homely and familiar 'Mc' acts against this meaning, however, making it a rather uncanny name altogether.

Other examples of contemporary Scottish gothic are alluded to in a similarly nuanced fashion in *The Cutting Room*. The novel opens with Rilke driving down The Crow Road to Mr McKindless's estate in Hyndland (*TCR*, 2). While The Crow Road is obviously an actual street on the western outskirts of Glasgow, it is hard not to see the use of it as an allusion to Iain Banks's gothic family saga *The Crow Road* (1992). This Banks novel concerns Prentice McHoan a young man preoccupied with death and sex, who, gently echoing aspects of *Justified Sinner*, becomes obsessed with an unfinished manuscript entitled 'The Crow Road' written by his uncle who has since disappeared.[65] The climax of *The Cutting Room* takes place, moreover, in Garnethill, which, like The Crow Road, is a real-life location in Glasgow (*TCR*, 272-276). It is a fitting location, however, as this prominent use of Garnethill could be read as a passing allusion to Denise Mina's crime novel *Garnethill* (1998). Like *Poor Things* and *The Crow Road*, the themes and concerns of Mina's novel are exceedingly relevant to *The Cutting Room*. *Garnethill* is the first of three thrillers

[65] Iain Banks, *The Crow Road* (London: Scribners, 1992).

about a psychologically-damaged woman named Maureen O'Donnell, who wakes up bleary-eyed and hungover one morning to discover her living room covered in blood and her ex-boyfriend Douglas tied to a chair with his throat cut open 'right back to the vertebrae', an image which is echoed in the photograph that Rilke encounters.[66] The police suspect Maureen of the crime and so, like many a noir protagonist, she is reluctantly forced to embark on her own amateur investigation. This investigation dredges up memories of childhood sexual abuse at the hands of her father. Like *The Cutting Room*, the novel revolves around sexual violence, exploitation, bodily horror, and a range of unsympathetic institutions, all signalling a horrific resurrection of the barbaric worsened by the contexts of modernity. *The Cutting Room*, then, is a particularly rich Scottish crime narrative that appropriates gothic and noir forms in its complex negotiation of aesthetics, visual culture, and violence. While the genres in which it participates are generally Americanized, it is nevertheless revealing to read the novel in its Scottish contexts, given its representation of Glasgow, its subtle allusions to other Scottish texts, and the ways that it bleeds into other examples of contemporary Scottish fiction.

'The Scotland of recent fiction', remarks Angus Calder, 'has been a grim and dangerous place'.[67] This observation refers not only to the post-industrial Scotland of disaffection and outmoded forms of masculinity, discussed in this thesis's first chapter, but also to the related efflorescence of more fantastic, outré, and nasty narratives of perversion, horror, and evil that have emerged from Scotland in the last few decades. As Calder's remark suggests, the overwhelming prominence

[66] Denise Mina, *Garnethill* [1998] (London: Bantam Books, 1999), p. 19.
[67] Angus Calder, 'By the Water of Leith I Sat Down and Wept: Reflections on Scottish Identity', in *New Scottish Writing*, ed. by Harry Ritchie (London: Bloomsbury, 1996), pp. 218-238 (p. 237).

of this form of fiction is a misrepresentation of Scotland. The crime narrative, however, has proven an effective vehicle for dealing with this distortion, since it gives these familiar 'grim and dangerous' qualities a context. The generic demands of crime fiction necessitate an engagement with the dark side of the human condition. What is more, the rational foundation of the genre in nineteenth-century detective fiction gives this engagement an additional disturbing force. Indeed, the majority of Scottish crime narratives in this vein provide gothic negotiations of the same aspects of modernity as those approached in the novels discussed in this thesis's first chapter. These gothic and noir crime narratives, particularly *Complicity* and *The Cutting Room*, interact meaningfully with the tropes, themes, and concerns of contiguous mainstream and literary Scottish fiction. This interaction contributes to the sense that, despite participating in transnational literary forms, Scottishness remains a meaningful category for the analysis of these texts. The baroque aesthetics, generic experimentation, and heightened fictive worlds of many of these Scottish crime novels in the gothic and noir mould introduce elements of carnivalesque and relativity. These elements are central to the subject of this thesis's next chapter, which explores parody, pastiche, and satire in contemporary Scottish crime fiction.

3. All Fun and Games Until Somebody Loses an Eye: Excess and Irreverence in the Parodic Crime Fiction of Allan Guthrie and Christopher Brookmyre

> The varied bouquet of smells was a delightful courtesy detail. From the overture of fresh vomit whiff that greeted you at the foot of the close stairs, through the mustique of barely cold urine on the landing, to the tear-gas, fist-in-face guard-dog of guff that savaged anyone entering the flat, it just told you how much fun this case would be.[1]

Although this final remark is clearly sarcastic, the case in question is indeed fun, in an extradiegetic sense at least. The particular form of exuberance that characterizes Christopher Brookmyre's work, deriving from its high-spirited irreverence, self-consciously outlandish plotting, and black humour, seems not only to be a supplementary feature of his work but its principal reason for being. The bold, carnivalesque opening chapter of his debut novel *Quite Ugly One Morning* (1996), from which this excerpt is taken, illustrates various key points that this thesis chapter addresses. The novel begins as a team of police officers arrive at a grotesque murder scene. The victim, who later turns out to have the unlikely name of Doctor Slaughter, has posthumously had his nose bitten off and his amputated fingers inserted into his nostrils. It is found that the person responsible has vomited down the back of the radiator. The postman who accidentally stumbled across the crime scene has in turn vomited with disgust and wet himself with panic, further contaminating the already horribly soiled locus. Finally, as the bad-taste *pièce de*

[1] Christopher Brookmyre, *Quite Ugly One Morning* [1996] (London: Little, Brown and Company, 1996), pp. 1-2. All subsequent references to this text will use this edition with the page number indicated in parenthesis.

résistance of this scenario, it is discovered that the perpetrator of the crime has inexplicably defecated on the victim's mantelpiece:

> The turd was enormous. An unhealthy, evil black colour like a huge rum truffle with too much cocoa in the mixture. It sat proudly in the middle of the mantelpiece like a favourite ornament, an appropriate monarch of what it surveyed [...]
> 'Jesus, it's some size of loaf right enough,' remarked Callaghan, in tones that Dalziel found just the wrong side of admiring.
> 'Aye, it must have been a wrench for the proud father to leave it behind,' she said acidly. (*QUOM*, 5-6)

The passage cited at the start of this chapter, which anticipates this nauseating discovery, is focalized from the perspective of a minor character named Inspector McGregor but rendered in a second-person narrative voice, a curiously recurrent feature of contemporary Scottish crime fiction. Unlike the more overtly politicized uses of the second-person found in *Laidlaw* (1977) and *Complicity* (1994), here it simply lends McGregor's account a conversational tone, which works well with the polyphonic quality of the utterance. The attendant range of pungent odours arising from the crime scene's various bodily excretions is described using the affected vocabulary of wine-tasting, evident in the use of terms such as 'varied bouquet', 'delightful courtesy detail', 'overture', and 'mustique'. This last example is a fitting neologism which combines the sophistication and intrigue implied by 'mystique' with the foetid connotations of mustiness. This ironic misuse of an inappropriately grandiose language to discuss aspects of life that are crude, repellent, and traditionally excluded from any kind of official discourse is a recurring feature of Brookmyre's prose style. It functions in a similar way to the other forms of parody that emerge in his work. The example illustrates Simon Dentith's argument

that parody has its roots in 'the to-and-fro of language' and it can be used to illuminate his proposition that there is 'a similarity between the everyday rejoinders of speech and the competitive relations between texts'.[2]

Regarding this final point, *Quite Ugly One Morning* is modelled on various kinds of genre text such as the police procedural, espionage fiction, and adventure narratives. Working in a way that is analogous to the above excerpt's intentionally incongruous use of an oenologist's specialized lexis, the novel deliberately activates ironic parallels with these other kinds of text in order to comment both on the forms that are mimicked and the new contexts to which these forms are applied. Linda Hutcheon calls this process, which she sees as a central mechanism of parody, 'ironic "trans-contextualisation"'.[3] Expressing parody in this way is useful because it accommodates the full gamut of relevant texts by de-emphasizing the notion that parody necessarily operates in one direction with a target text that is the subject of ridicule or condemnation by the parodic text. The opening chapter of Brookmyre's novel takes its lead from the police procedural, in which the discovery of a corpse and the forensic examination of the crime scene often naturally form the basis of the opening scene. In the context of the generic crime thriller, however, there is an expectation that such a scene will serve some meaningful narrative purpose, by furnishing clues about the crime or supplying an exciting or emotional hook concerning the characters involved.

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[2] Simon Dentith, *Parody* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 37. All subsequent references to this text will use this edition with the page number indicated in parenthesis.

[3] Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms* (New York: Methuen, 1985), p. 12. All subsequent references to this text will use this edition with the page number indicated in parenthesis.

The examination of the crime scene that begins Ian Rankin's *Mortal Causes* (1994), for instance, sets up the themes of sectarian violence and office politics that dominate the rest of the narrative. Such scenes are also a mainstay of forensic thrillers such as the work of Patricia Cornwell and Kathy Reichs, and the *Crime Scene Investigation* television franchise (2000-present). The opening of *Quite Ugly One Morning*, however, derives much of its humour from wilfully and audaciously sabotaging such generic expectations. It does not set up an intrigue or belabour any significant aspect of the plot. Instead, it presents a wildly scatological, slapstick episode in which the team of police officers, understandably reluctant to get too hands-on in the crime-solving process, mainly indulge in vulgar but highly developed banter. The first chapter of Brookmyre's novel, then, activates the reader's experiences of a particular mode of fiction, only to present an ironic inversion of their expectations. This strategy serves several different purposes. It works to intensify the anarchic, surprising sense of humour that underscores the episode by inviting a comparison between its casual, exuberant inanity and the taut, tightly-plotted thrillers that it parodies. It also perhaps directs a sense of mild polemic towards the crime genre, however, by subverting the urban police procedural's pretentions towards grittiness and cynicism.

There is also a distinctively Scottish dimension involved in this 'ironic trans-contextualisation'. The urban police procedural is very much a culturally American form of crime fiction, at least partly derivative of noir and the American hard-boiled tradition. The first chapter of Brookmyre's novel thus serves to underscore the incongruity of certain aspects of the mode when it is uprooted and transferred to a

contemporary Scottish context. The victim's fingers having been inserted into his nostril, for instance, replicates the convention of contemporary gothic crime fiction that Lee Horsley calls 'the psychopath [...] writing his grievances on the bodies of his victims', a motif exemplified in Scottish crime fiction by *Complicity*.[4] The replication of this generic paradigm in *Quite Ugly One Morning* is obviously not neutral imitation. Here, the victim's body has not been mutilated in an act of revenge or in a misguided attempt to comment on the victim's perceived sins against society, but the mutilation is casual and jokey, childishly alluding to the smell of the perpetrator's faeces. The expected grittiness of the urban crime thriller and official rhetoric of the police are likewise imitated and transformed by one officer's sarcastic rendering of an otherwise well-worn line: '"So are we treating the death as suspicious, sir?" chimed Skinner cheerily from behind' (*QUOM*, 4). The overblown stunt action heroics of American cop dramas are given a similar low-key treatment in the scene, emerging ironically transposed in a slapstick moment when the police officers all have to negotiate a puddle of urine on entering the locus, each invariably splashing a young dim-witted recruit (*QUOM*, 4).

The scene, and Brookmyre's work in general, therefore corresponds with the lowbrow, bodily, non-official folk humour that has been associated with Scottish identity for several centuries. This feature is observable, for instance, in the work of poets such as Robert Fergusson and Robert Burns in the eighteenth century. More pertinent to the example in question, contemporary manifestations of this phenomenon include the bawdy, unruly, irreverent, and bad-taste comedy present in the stand-up routines of Billy Connolly, Phil Kay, Frankie Boyle, and Jerry

[4] Lee Horsley, *Twentieth-Century Crime Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 186.

Sadowitz, and mainstream Scottish television programmes such as *Rab C. Nesbitt* (1988-present), *The High Life* (1994-1995), *Chewin' the Fat* (1999-2002), *The Live Floor Show* (2002-2003), *Still Game* (2002-2007), and *Gary Tank Commander* (2009-present). More challenging, literary forms of the trope can also be found in the work of writers such as Irvine Welsh, Iain Banks, James Kelman, and Grant Morrison. The frequent profanity and use of earthy Scottish terms such as 'guff', 'keech', 'glaikit', 'baw-faced', 'ginger-heided', 'stoater', and 'jobbie' that are littered throughout the first chapter of Brookmyre's novel contribute further to this non-official folk humour, bearing out William McIlvanney's notion that Scottish speech 'just will not tolerate pomposity'.[5]

However, Brookmyre himself has commented on the problems of unthinkingly ascribing a national dimension to this tradition:

> I would say that I identify with a Scottish tradition of scatological humour, but with reservations as to whether that tradition can lay claim to any ethnic purity. The names François Rabelais, Alfred Jarry and Monty Python loom large in my list of irresistibly bad influences.[6]

Indeed, whether or not Brookmyre's work articulates a distinctively Scottish variant of this comedic paradigm is an issue that requires further exploration later in this chapter. Despite downplaying the apparent Scottishness of this mode, his comment here is revealing in the context of this chapter for two reasons. First, although he recognises that his scatological humour might necessarily not be exclusively

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[5] Isobel Murray and Bob Tait, 'Plato in a Boiler Suit: William McIlvanney' [An interview with William McIlvanney], in *Scottish Writers Talking*, ed. by Isobel Murray (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 1996), pp. 132-154 (136).

[6] Christopher Brookmyre, '"Plots are for Cemetaries": An Interview with Christopher Brookmyre', in *Edinburgh Review*, 102 (1999), 48-52 (p. 49).

Scottish, his comment nevertheless obliquely acknowledges that it is a foreign element to the crime genre and it is one that gives his work much of its unique character. Second, the influences Brookmyre mentions are all heavily engaged in the modes of expression that are most relevant to this chapter: parody, irreverence, satire, and grotesque realism.

The opening chapter of *Quite Ugly One Morning*, then, helpfully introduces the critical contexts of this chapter. Most conspicuously, it exemplifies a far more flippant side to Scottish crime fiction than that which is explored in this thesis's first two chapters. The tonal levity and quality of excess, however, should not be taken as any kind of indication that the texts covered in this chapter are any less relevant to the overarching project or any less revealing with regard to the interactions between Scottish fiction and the crime genre. The above analysis also calls attention to the complex relationships between different texts and between different modes of expression. The ways that these relations contribute to a text's meanings and effects is another important critical context of this chapter. While the relationships between texts have a bearing on all textual discourse, parody brings them to the surface, foregrounding the dynamic of repetition and difference that underlies the workings of language, intertextual activity, and genre. As such, parody is a mode that is particularly worthy of attention to this thesis. It is a mode of discourse, moreover, that lays strong emphasis on the kind of mechanisms of repetition and difference that dominate the readings of Scottish crime fiction in the earlier chapters. These mechanisms frequently carry a national dimension when considered in the context of this thesis. Unreconstructed repetition usually corresponds to Americanization and

international standardization, while a greater degree of difference often signals texts that are more distinctively Scottish. For the purposes of this chapter, then, it is initially helpful to consider these critical contexts in more detail before proceeding to examine the more specific uses of parody and its related forms, pastiche and satire, that appear in contemporary Scottish crime fiction, using the work of Allan Guthrie and Christopher Brookmyre as the two main case studies.

Genre provides one way of expressing and exploring the relationships between texts. In this regard, it lies on a spectrum between all-encompassing theories of intertextuality, which see texts of all kinds and all periods as mutually interdependent, and more specialized textual relations such as pastiche or parody, whereby a text is often deliberately modelled on another specific text or a certain kind of text. Graham Allen defines intertextuality as a critical position which holds that meaning is not located in a single text in isolation, but 'between a text and all the other texts to which it refers and relates, moving out from the independent text into a network of textual relations'.[7] The meanings, effects, and sensations that a text generates are only made possible by the context of all other textual activity. According to advocates of intertextuality, the meanings and qualities of a text are always relative, existing only in relation to other texts.

To offer an example from earlier in this thesis, the quality of verisimilitude that underpins McIlvanney's *Laidlaw* is not an intrinsic characteristic of the particular arrangement of words based on their simulation of reality, but in fact an unavoidably comparative quality that can only be attributed to the novel in relation to other texts. When a novel is described as 'realistic', this description is based on

[7] Graham Allen, *Intertextuality* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 1.

how well it accords with notions of literary realism and how well it rejects qualities such as fantasy or stylization, all of which are informed by other texts. Indeed, to illustrate this point, *Laidlaw*'s veneer of realism becomes intensified when read in the context of traditional analytical detective fiction, which arguably tends to take place in a hermetically sealed artificial world in which credibility is stretched beyond breaking point. As McIlvanney puts it, 'With many [detective stories], I suffer reality-starvation after a few pages and find myself staring at the depicted events across a credibility gap as wide as the Grand Canyon'.[8] With this example, then, McIlvanney is obviously aware of the generic traditions which might productively inform readings of his novel.

As Roland Barthes's formulation of intertextuality makes clear, however, the network of textual relations in which a text participates is conceptually infinite rather than limited to the conscious uses of source material or deliberate allusions:

> Intertextuality, the condition of any text whatsoever, cannot, of course, be reduced to a problem of sources or influences; the intertext is a general field of anonymous formulae whose origin can scarcely ever be located; of unconscious or automatic quotations, given without quotation-marks.[9]

Following Barthes, Campbell Tatham argues that 'each page is a field on which is inscribed the trace of every conceivable page recorded in the past or anticipated in the future'.[10] This understanding of textual discourse seems unworkably abstract,

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[8] William McIlvanney, 'The Courage of our Doubts', in William McIlvanney, *Surviving the Shipwreck* (Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing, 1991), pp. 153-162 (p. 155).
[9] Roland Barthes, 'Theory of the Text', in *Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader*, ed. by Robert Young (London: Routledge, 1981), p. 39.
[10] Campbell Tatham, 'Mythotherapy and Postmodern Fictions: Magic is Afoot', in *Performance in Postmodern Culture*, ed. by Michel Benamou and Charles Caramello (Milwaukee: Center for Twentieth Century Studies, 1977), pp. 137-157 (p. 146).

implicitly positing the ideal reading of a text as one which is informed by a familiarity with all other texts, including those not yet written. However, this understanding of reading can also be seen as liberating, relieving the reader from the futile task of trying to discern the author's intended meaning of a text. Instead, the text is opened up to a limitless range of interpretative possibilities, including readings that seem to go 'against the grain' of the text. This more liberated approach to interpretation is especially important to this chapter because many of the texts covered here do not necessarily invite traditional, academic literary criticism. They are nevertheless as revealing with regard to questions of nation and genre when they subjected to close analysis as more self-consciously literary texts.

It is also this more open-ended, ludic form of intertextuality that Linda Hutcheon has in mind when she incisively draws upon the critical framework of intertextual discourse in her monograph *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms* (1985). She reflects on the 'contextual free play' represented by intertextuality, considering its relevance to parodic discourse:

> While parody offers a much more limited and controlled version of this activation of the past by giving it a new and often ironic context, it makes similar demands upon the reader, but these are demands more on his or her knowledge and recollection than on his or her openness to play. (*ATOP*, 5)

In terms of suggesting interpretative strategies, then, genre occupies a kind of middle-ground between intertextuality's 'general field of anonymous formulae whose origin can scarcely ever be located' and parody's 'much more limited and controlled version of this activation of the past'. The relations between generic texts are much more open and far less strictly determined than those that exist between a

parody and a parodied text. In testament to this argument, the capacities of a parody are certainly compromised, with any polemic intent effectively neutralized, when the reader is unfamiliar with what is being parodied. Conversely, a reader who is unfamiliar with all the relevant generic contexts can still be in a position to understand and appreciate a genre text. Like parody, however, the richness and resonance of a reading of a generic text depends to some extent upon the reader's level of competence and experience with the genre. Fully recognising the revolutionary qualities of the American hard-boiled tradition, for instance, requires an awareness of the other sub-genres against which it is defined, such as the more cerebral analytical detective fiction of the nineteenth century or the English golden-age detective stories of the inter-war period. Genre does not make the same demands on a reader's knowledge and recollection as parody in the sense that a reader new to crime fiction can still follow and enjoy the narrative. A reader who is well immersed in the crime genre, however, can more readily identify its clichés and is better prepared to appreciate the value and innovation of more original content. As an approach to texts, genre offers more of an 'openness to play' than parody, in the sense that it can open up interpretative possibilities between texts that are unfamiliar with one another where no direct influence is possible, but it nevertheless relies upon the same mechanisms of repetition and difference.

Building on his assumption that parody has its roots in 'the to-and-fro of language', Simon Dentith argues that it is deeply involved in the processes of echo and adaptation that underlie all discourse:

> [A]s we use language – necessarily not our own – to a greater or lesser degree we *make* it our own. So while all language use certainly involves imitation, the particular inflection that we give to that imitation (and parody is one possible inflection) indicates the extent to which we have adapted language to occasion, transformed the value given to the utterance, and thus redirected the evaluative direction in that chain of utterances. Parody is one of the means available to us to achieve all these ends. (*P*, 4)

Dentith's line of reasoning here also provides a revealing model for understanding genre. In line with his argument that 'parody involves the imitation and transformation of another's words' (*P*, 3), genre is also founded on a dynamic of repetition and difference. This dynamic is highlighted in Stephen Neale's remarkably succinct characterization of genre as 'difference *in* repetition'.[11] Rather tellingly for this chapter, Hutcheon's definition of parody strongly echoes Neale's definition of genre: 'parody is repetition, but repetition that includes difference; it is imitation with critical ironic distance, whose irony can cut both ways' (*ATOP*, 37). Corresponding to Dentith's thoughts on parody, Neale's definition of genre and Hutcheon's definition of parody both emphasize the significance of repetition and adaptation. To adapt Dentith's argument to occasion, then, when a writer works within a well-established recognisable genre, as is inevitably the case with all Scottish crime writers since the 1970s, they are working in a field that is 'necessarily not [their] own', but they can '*make* it [their] own' through 'the particular inflection that [they] give to that imitation'. Applying Dentith's argument to genre, then, the specific configuration that a writer gives to a genre can transform the values and assumptions of the genre via a range of evaluative intonations, such as deference, nostalgia, irony, derision, or outright subversion.

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[11] Stephen Neale, *Genre* (London: British Film Institute, 1980), p. 50.

Such issues are central to this thesis, which is concerned with the extent to which examples of the well-worn, largely Americanized crime genre can be adapted and made relevant within the contexts of contemporary Scotland and contemporary Scottish fiction. Indeed, the features of parody that Dentith touches upon, those of adapting a language to occasion and transforming the values of an earlier utterance, are apparent in the readings of Scottish crime texts that appear in this thesis's first two chapters. It was argued that the crime novels of William McIlvanney, Ian Rankin, Iain Banks, and Louise Welsh draw upon the American modes of crime fiction in a meaningful way, purposefully defamiliarizing both the source material and the new contexts to which it is applied, in order to articulate anxieties about Scotland's political realities and negotiate constructions of Scottish identity. It is the particular inflections that these writers give their contributions to the crime genre that open up their novels to the prospect of a distinctively Scottish crime fiction.

Parody might just be one of many possible inflections that can achieve the ends of adapting language to occasion and transforming the value of an utterance, but it is a special inflection because it foregrounds the mechanisms of repetition and adaptation that underlie language, textual activity, and genre. As Dentith points out, the capacity of parody to dramatize these mechanisms at a surface level works in tandem with the open-ended approaches to interpretation suggested by intertextual discourse: 'Following the French theorist Roland Barthes' notion of the "death of the author", parody emerges as a formal practice in which the densely allusive nature of all writing is made especially transparent, so its "authorship" becomes problematic' (*P*, 15). With parodic discourse, then, the act of echoing or replication is not simply

an unavoidable condition, as it is in the other phenomena of language, textual activity, and genre, but it is a process that very deliberately draws attention to itself using a variety of strategies such as exaggeration, subversion, and ironic trans-contextualization. Margaret Rose's work on parody elaborates this line of thought, highlighting the metafictional dimensions involved in parodic discourse:

> Many parodies also foreground the techniques used in the construction of other works in their parody of them in a manner which is similar to other non-parodic meta-fictional works, but do so as a part of their comic (and complex) reconstruction of the other work, or with some comic juxtaposition of elements of that work to which their comic undermining of reader expectations for it is related.[12]

As Rose suggests, parody is able to interact in a particularly meaningful way with its source material, drawing attention to its styles, techniques, and conventions whilst simultaneously participating in them. The effect of this kind of interaction is emphasized when applied to a generic parody since examples of genre are necessarily already engaged in the practices that Rose outlines, drawing on many of the same conventions and exploiting or subverting the attendant reader expectations. Parody is therefore a revealing subject matter in the context of this thesis because it dramatizes the central processes that are involved in the examples of Scottish crime fiction examined in the other chapters, self-reflexively making these processes a surface feature of the text.

This self-consciousness and concern with surface is especially the case when it comes to appropriating the American hard-boiled and noir variants of the genre. In his thorough and innovative study of film noir *More Than Night* (1998), James

[12] Margaret Rose, *Parody: Ancient, Modern, and Post-Modern* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 95.

Naremore argues that, far from signalling the decline of a genre's relevance or popularity, parody serves a valuable function in the development of a genre, and that the role of parody is particularly pronounced in the case of noir:

> [E]ven when parody ridicules a style, it feeds on what it imitates. I would go further: much like analytic criticism, parody helps define and even create certain styles, giving them visibility and status [...] It seems obvious that both parody and criticism have helped to shape the popular conception of film noir, enhancing its strength as an intellectual fashion and as a commercial product. Even so, we cannot say exactly when parodies of noir began, and we cannot distinguish precisely between parody, pastiche, and "normal" textuality.[13]

As Naremore indicates, there is something of a special relationship between noir and parody. He points out examples from the classic film noir cycle where part of the pleasure arises from the way that the text verges on self-parody, such as Jacques Tourneur's *Out of the Past* (1947) or Orson Welles's *The Lady from Shanghai* (1947). However, the sense of excess, self-consciousness and humour that is deeply embedded in the language and conventions of the hard-boiled tradition, which can be traced right back to its inception, already borders on the parodic. It is worth briefly exploring the ways that this parodic dimension is evident even in some of the most defining examples of the sub-genre.

In the opening paragraph of Raymond Chandler's *The Big Sleep* (1939), for instance, Philip Marlowe says 'I was neat, clean, shaved and sober, and I didn't care who knew it'.[14] Like many lines from Chandler's novels, this sentence exhibits a knowing irony, which, in this case, self-reflexively alludes to the generic stock

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[13] James Naremore, *More Than Night: Film Noir in Its Contexts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), pp. 200-201.
[14] Raymond Chandler, *The Big Sleep* (Middlesex: Penguin, 1939), p. 9. All subsequent references to this text will use this edition with the page number indicated in parenthesis.

character type of the hard-drinking, rough-living private detective. One of the earliest examples of the hard-boiled crime novel, Dashiell Hammett's *Red Harvest* (1929), also adopts a certain playfulness when it comes to generic conventions. One chapter begins, for instance, with Hammett's very masculine, heterosexual private investigator, the Continental Op, mischievously misleading the reader about another character's sex:

> At the First National Bank I got hold of an assistant cashier named Albury, a nice-looking blond youngster of twenty-five or so.
> 'I certified the check for Willsson,' he said after I had explained what I was up to.[15]

In a later chapter, the Op deals out a rant to a character named Elihu Willsson about straight-talking and honest labour, resulting in a piece of dialogue which seems to foreground the mode's anti-literary sensibility in a rather self-conscious fashion:

> 'What's the use of getting poetic about it?' I growled. 'If you've a fairly honest piece of work to be done in my line, and you want to pay a decent price, maybe I'll take it on. But a lot of foolishness about smoking rats and pig-pens doesn't mean anything to me'. (*RH*, 39)

The thrust of the Op's indignation here is primarily political, railing against the decadence of modern society, but by drawing attention to its own rhetorical strategy, the novel shows a consciousness about form and a concern with competing modes of expression that is certainly in the territory of parodic discourse. This concern with language is elaborated in a later scene where the Op meets a lawyer named Charles

[15] Dashiell Hammett, *Red Harvest* [1929] (New York: Vintage Books, 1972), p. 20. All subsequent references to this text will use this edition with the page number indicated in parenthesis.

Proctor Dawn who he gently lampoons for his incomprehensibly elitist legalese: 'He knew a lot of sentences like those, and he didn't mind using them on me' (*RH*, 164). Perhaps the most remarkable instance of *Red Harvest*'s pseudo-parodic sense of self-awareness concerning its own form is the passage in which the Op reads about falsified and mythologized versions of himself and the case he is currently working on in the *Evening Herald*: 'At the very moment that the janitor was finding the dead lawyer, I, it seems, was in Helen Albury's flat, having forced an entrance, and was threatening her' (*RH*, 174).

In mainstream American crime fiction, the hard-boiled mode's general sense of excess is perhaps nowhere more conspicuously expressed, however, than in the best-selling fiction of Mickey Spillane. His characters are so superficial and overstated, and his plots so lurid and unrealistic, that his novels could quite easily and productively be read as examples of parody or pastiche. Indeed, to read his texts somewhat against the grain, his approach to the hard-boiled mode is so exaggerated and superficial that, in some sense, it serves as an ironic commentary on the more central variants of the tradition. His ramped-up, tough-guy investigator Mike Hammer, for example, is more of a cipher than a rounded character, as the opening of *I, The Jury* (1947) demonstrates:

> The body. Now I could call it that. Yesterday it was Jack Williams, the guy that shared the same muddy bed with me through two years of warfare in the stinking slime of the jungle. Jack, the guy who said he'd give his right arm for a friend, and did, when he stopped a bastard of a Jap from slitting me in two [...] For the first time in my life I felt like crying.[16]

[16] Mickey Spillane, *I, The Jury* [1947] (London: Corgi, 1971), p. 7. All subsequent references to this text will use this edition with the page number indicated in parenthesis.

> I'm not letting the killer go through the tedious process of the law [...] The law is fine. But this time I'm the law and I'm not going to be cold and impartial. (*ITJ*, 8-9)

The final sentence quoted in the first passage has a very clear and deliberate ironic dimension in its trumpeting of an over-exaggerated masculinity, which is apparently so tough that he has reached middle-age without ever crying. In these passages, moreover, Hammer seems to present himself as the ultimate hard-boiled protagonist. He is cynical, he is plain-speaking, he is a damaged war veteran, he is a vigilante, he is casually racist, and he acts according to a black-and-white moral code. However, there is such an excess and such a transparency about Spillane's use of these hard-boiled clichés that, like parodic reworkings of generic conventions, they at once re-energize and undermine them. Indeed, a particularly illuminating remark from *The Times*' obituary of Spillane stresses both this sense of ambivalence and the related picaresque qualities of his fiction: 'he had an influence on the craft of the thriller in much the same way that "spaghetti" Westerns affected the traditional Western'.[17] It is these qualities of excess and transparency, moreover, that drive Robert Aldrich's deeply ambivalent film noir *Kiss Me, Deadly* (1955), an adaptation that Kim Newman pithily refers to as 'a subversive reading of Mickey Spillane's 1953 thick-ear novel, in which the world is so off balance that the credits roll backwards'.[18] On the evidence of these canonical examples of hard-boiled crime fiction, then, Naremore's observation that there is no clear distinction between parody, pastiche,

[17] 'Mickey Spillane' [Obituary], *The Times*, 19 July 2006 <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/obituaries/article689464.ece> [accessed 22 September 2012].
[18] Kim Newman, *Millenium Movies: End of the World Cinema* (London: Titan Books, 1999), p. 73.

and normal textuality with regard to noir is thus both particularly astute and equally applicable to its hard-boiled sources.

Because pastiche mediates between more conventional uses of genre and parodic approaches, often alternately performing similar functions to both categories, it is appropriate initially to consider examples of Scottish crime fiction that more squarely fall under the category of pastiche before moving on to discuss more clear-cut cases of parody. Pastiche is a much-maligned form in current critical circles. In an oft-cited passage from *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991), Fredric Jameson expressively argues that the practice of pastiche is symptomatic of what he sees as postmodernism's complicity with corporate globalization and the accompanying standardization of culture:

> Pastiche is, like parody, the imitation of a peculiar or unique, idiosyncratic style, the wearing of a linguistic mask, speech in a dead language. But it is the neutral practice of such mimicry, without any of parody's ulterior motives, amputated of the satiric impulse, devoid of laughter and of any conviction that alongside the abnormal tongue you have momentarily borrowed, some healthy linguistic normality still exists. Pastiche is thus blank parody, a statue with blind eyeballs [...] For with the collapse of the high-modernist ideology of style […] the producers of culture have nowhere to turn but to the past: the imitation of dead styles, speech through all the masks and voices stored up in the imaginary museum of a now global culture. [19]

To borrow Hutcheon's terms, Jameson frames pastiche as imitation *without* critical distance. As far as he is concerned, when a work of pastiche evokes previous texts or styles, this evocation lacks purpose and meaning, and, what is more, the practice inhibits innovation and upholds an international standardization of culture. Jameson's argument that the proliferation of pastiche seems to deny the existence of

[19] Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), pp. 17-18.

a ‘healthy linguistic normality’ is particularly interesting in the context of this chapter. It corresponds with Naremore’s observation, explored above, that the particularities of hard-boiled and noir mean that ‘we cannot distinguish precisely between parody, pastiche, and “normal” textuality’. Analysing the work of several recent Scottish writers, whose crime novels are at least partly involved in the ‘imitation of dead styles’ and which use the ‘masks and voices’ from an ‘imaginary museum of global culture’, should serve to demonstrate that there are still significant Scottish and transnational dimensions to their work that are worthy of critical attention.

Allan Guthrie

The crime novels of Scottish writers such as Allan Guthrie, Tony Black, Russel D. McLean, Ray Banks, and Craig Russell so closely pastiche and affectionately parody the American hard-boiled and noir forms in terms of language, narrative, and character types, that it is difficult to describe their work as distinctively Scottish in any obvious way. Indeed, Scottishness seems to play a far less conspicuous role in their novels than it does in the fiction covered in the first two chapters, in the sense that they do not accommodate a profound engagement with distinctively Scottish concerns or draw upon a definitive sense of setting. Their work is nevertheless relevant to this thesis, however, for two main reasons. First, it emphasizes the ways in which Scotland is as susceptible to the processes of globalization as anywhere else, illustrating that Scottishness does not necessarily have to be a constantly visible feature of texts written by Scottish writers. Second, it demonstrates the ways that,

although the specificities of place and time are not foregrounded in the same way as in the crime fiction explored earlier in this thesis, these specificities can nevertheless play an important role in how a text is understood, regardless of whether they are purposefully embedded or otherwise. Indeed, Peter Jackson, Philip Crang, and Claire Dwyer point out that even the most internationally standardized products of globalization are still necessarily informed by and involved in local contexts:

> While particular goods may appear to be 'de-territorialized' in the sense that they are sourced from places that may be very distant from where they are consumed, their meanings are 're-territorialized' both through distinctive local contexts of consumption and through product 'placements' that emphasize specific geographical contexts (even where those geographies are purely imaginary).[20]

In many of the texts in question, then, any sense of Scottishness is either sidelined or non-specific. In some cases, the fact that the settings or characters are Scottish does not play a central role in the text's meanings or aesthetics. In other cases, more 'purely imaginary' or superficial modes of Scottishness are mapped onto existing literary models from elsewhere. In line with Jackson, Crang, and Dwyer's argument, however, both of these scenarios are nonetheless very revealing in the context of transnational studies. Indeed, the omission of Scottishness is often as telling as its presence when considered in a contemporary, international context. Even where contemporary Scottish crime novels seem to imitate the American traditions rather blankly, the crude replication of these conventions in a different context is still highly significant. Equally important are the marginalized or artificial Scottish

[20] Peter Jackson, Philip Crang, and Claire Dwyer, 'Introduction: The Spaces of Transnationality', in *Transnational Spaces*, ed. by Peter Jackson, Philip Crang, and Claire Dwyer (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 1-23 (p. 6).

aspects that do subtly emerge. This chapter will use the work of Allan Guthrie as a case study to illustrate the ways that the crime fiction by authors such as Black, McLean, Banks, and Russell functions in light of a transnational reading.

The sense of place plays an increasingly important role in the marketing and consumption of crime fiction. 'Crime fiction is a busy, crowded genre', insists Ken Gelder. 'It may be difficult to carve out a unique identity in such a field, with so many different kinds of investigators in so many different kinds of places (all the major cities and most outlying regions, too)'.[21] Faced with such a competitive market-place and participating in a genre regularly upbraided for its formulism, the commercial and critical reception of a crime novel hinges on those details that make it stand out from the many other examples of the genre. For many crime writers, as Gelder suggests, carving out a 'unique identity' within such a densely populated genre consists as much in their choice and use of setting as it does in their creation of an idiosyncratic investigator.

The novels of Allan Guthrie (b. 1965), however, tend not to use investigators and they certainly do not corroborate the argument that a sense of place plays a central role in individuating examples of the crime genre. Guthrie's lurid crime novels are set in Edinburgh, though a reader might reasonably be forgiven for forgetting this detail, especially with regard to his most recent texts. Unlike most examples of crime fiction, they do not conspicuously advertise or exploit their area of setting. There are only a few instances where it is clear that they deliberately draw on imaginative conceptions of either Edinburgh or Scotland, or indeed the

[21] Ken Gelder, *Popular Fiction: The Logics and Practices of a Literary Field* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 63.

constructions of identity associated with these areas, as an essential ingredient in their generation of meanings or effects. Their Scottish setting seems to be, for the most part, incidental. Indeed, when fellow Scottish crime writer Tony Black asked Guthrie if he felt he belonged to an Orcadian literary tradition because that is where he grew up, Guthrie used the question as a springboard to acknowledge that his allegiances and interests lie more consciously with the concerns of crime fiction than with those of Scottish fiction from any region: 'I don't feel part of any kind of geographical tradition. I feel part of the noir fiction tradition, but I don't think noir knows geographical boundaries. It first appeared in the US, but it's international now'.[22] His description of noir fiction presents it as a potent cultural manifestation of globalization. Noir fiction, as Guthrie sees it, originated as a distinctive local phenomenon in certain regions of America but it has since become a global occurrence, a mode of fiction apparently capable of indiscriminately traversing national boundaries. Reiterating this point, Naremore argues that 'Noir in the late twentieth century spreads across virtually every national boundary and every form of communication', and he quite reasonably takes this globe-spanning as evidence of the mode's aesthetic and cultural importance.[23]

Noir fiction's transformation from local to global, though, need not be seen as a straightforward indication of the mode's universal appeal and relevance, but perhaps as an example of the standardization of culture. Jameson's discussion of globalization reveals the profound ambivalences involved. On the one hand, he

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[22] Allan Guthrie, 'Tony Black interviews Allan Guthrie on *Slammer*', *Books from Scotland* (2009) <http://www.booksfromscotland.com/Authors/Allan-Guthrie/Slammer-Interview> [accessed 22 September 2012].
[23] James Naremore, *More Than Night: Film Noir in its Contexts*, p. 38.

argues, globalization represents 'a postmodern celebration of difference and differentiation: suddenly all the cultures around the world are placed in tolerant contact with each other in a kind of immense cultural pluralism which it would be very difficult not to welcome'. On the other hand, however, he points out that it corresponds to 'a picture of standardization on an unparalleled scale; of forced integration as well, into a world-system from which "delinking" (to use Samir Amin's term) is henceforth impossible and even unthinkable and inconceivable'.[24] In line with Rick Altman's argument that 'genres operate like nations', explored in this thesis's introduction, there is a parallel between globalization's contradictory integration of multiculturalism and global standardization, and the central tension at the heart of genre fiction.[25] This tension is underscored by Neale's formulation of genre as 'difference *in* repetition', discussed above, which takes into account 'the nature of the economy of genre, an economy of variation rather than of rupture'.[26] Indeed, Jackson, Crang, and Dwyer's argument that globalization can paradoxically actually help emphasize a product's local contexts and details provides a parallel to Gelder's argument that 'crime fiction is as "individualized" as a genre can be' in the sense that it is 'a mass-marketed genre that turns on the details'.[27] Just as the sheer amount of crime fiction published means that the specificities become all the more important when reading individual examples of genre, the minor details and brief acknowledgements of place, however apparently insignificant, become all the more

[24] Fredric Jameson, 'Notes on Globalization as a Philosophical Issue', in *The Cultures of Globalization*, ed. by Fredric Jameson and Masao Miyoshi (London: Duke University Press, 1998), pp. 54-77 (pp. 56-57).
[25] Rick Altman, *Film/Genre* (London: BFI, 1999), p. 195.
[26] Stephen Neale, *Genre*, p. 50.
[27] Gelder, *Popular Fiction*, p. 63.

vital with products that are in danger in of succumbing to global standardization. It is important, then, to take into account the ways in which Scottishness can still participate in the meanings and sensations generated by Guthrie's novels even when it is not necessarily a central concern, as well as with regard to the few instances where the area of setting is more consciously exploited. Indeed, Guthrie's work provides a useful paradigm within the context of this thesis's exploration of the relationship between Scottish culture and the crime genre. Because they do not intentionally labour their Scottish setting, it is revealing to consider the ways in which these more generic, less deliberately territorialized examples of Scottish crime fiction nevertheless share important characteristics, themes, and concerns with examples of Scottish fiction outside the crime genre and indeed more thoroughly Scottish examples of Scottish crime fiction.

Allan Guthrie's brand of crime fiction might be most appropriately understood as a pastiche of the American styles of dark crime fiction emerging since the 1920s. His work playfully imitates hard-boiled and noir fiction though in most cases it presents an excessive and exaggerated version of these modes, in some cases tipping towards the more parodic end of the spectrum. The book-covers of both the Polygon (UK) and Hard Case Crime (US) editions of his novels seem to advertise this conception of his work, featuring shadowy urban scenes, self-consciously lurid images of scantily-clad females and murder weapons, and laudatory quotations from various illustrious American writers of these kinds of crime fiction, including George Pelecanos, Ed Gorman, and Bill Pronzini. The short blurb about Guthrie featured on several of the Polygon editions likewise plays up this dimension of the

writer, though admittedly the comparisons made between him and other writers do seem also to capitalize on the author's nationality and draw attention to the Scottish setting:

> Allan Guthrie writes adrenaline-rush books about bad people doing bad things to each other. The world of his books is one where absurdity colours the landscape. A world where the violence is red raw, morality is a grey area, and the humour is jet black. He has been compared to Ian Rankin, Irvine Welsh and James Ellroy.[28]

All these characteristics of Guthrie's writing that this description deliberately foregrounds, such as the frantic pacing, the sense of absurdity and meaninglessness, the unapologetically brutal representation of violence, the lack of moral underpinning, and the gallows humour are the qualities most closely associated with the hard-boiled and noir sub-genres. Even within the confines of these popular and well-worn fictional modes, however, certain distinctive characteristics can be discerned in Guthrie's novels, and it is useful to consider the ways that these characteristics spring from existing conventions.

Guthrie's excessive, stylized approach to these sub-genres is evident even in his use of language and idiosyncratic prose style. Guthrie's proclivity for very short sentences, for instance, is often highly visible on the page, such as in this passage from *Hard Man* (2007), in which the main character Gordon Pearce overreacts to a stranger bumping into him:

> Your sister ODs.

[28] Allan Guthrie, *Kiss Her Goodbye* [2005] (Edinburgh: Polygon, 2006); Allan Guthrie, *Hard Man* [2007] (Edinburgh: Polygon, 2007). Subsequent references to these texts will use these editions with the page numbers indicated in parenthesis.

> You kill her dealer.
> You go to prison for ten years.
> Is that funny? Is it? Laugh. That's right.
> You're back on the outside for a few months and some fuckhead stabs your mother.
> You get over that.
> You get a dog.
> Some fucker kills your dog.
> Ha bloody ha.
> Try to shed some of the rage and some arsehole junkie Happy Harry Fuckbastard bumps into you. And he's stinking of cheap aftershave. And he's laughing. (*HM*, 108)

Fragmentary sentences of this kind, consisting of only three or four words, are fairly commonplace throughout Guthrie's novels. Sometimes they simply reveal details about the scene, the characters, and the plot in an economical way. The above passage, for instance, offers a particularly concentrated dose of exposition and establishes the character's furious frame of mind. Often, however, the short sentences are also used in Guthrie's work to mimic the rapid and fractured thought processes of the characters. In these cases the short units of words are not technically sentences. The various facets of Guthrie's prose style, though, are not in themselves unique to his novels within the field of crime fiction. At times, it evokes the hard-boiled mode's no-nonsense style of austere objectivity, world-weary cynicism, and understatement. Frequently, however, it is also redolent of noir fiction's characteristic style with its fragmentary, angst-ridden, subjective, and oneiric passages. In these instances, the mode of narration sometimes has closer affinities with the modernist technique of interior monologue. Guthrie's novels offer exaggerated and excessive versions of the characteristic styles of both hard-boiled and noir fiction. It is worth briefly examining these narrative modes and the meanings they typically generate.

The pared-down, hard-boiled style is an ideologically-charged mode discernible in the work of many American crime writers, including James M. Cain (1892-1977), Horace McCoy (1897-1955), and, later, James Ellroy (b. 1948). The style is evident, for instance, in Cain's *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (1934) even though the sentences are often longer than those cited above from *Hard Man*:

> It took me a half-hour to get sold on the job, but at the end of it I was in the filling station, fixing flats.
> 'What's your name, hey?'
> 'Frank Chambers.'
> 'Nick Papadakis, mine.'
> We shook hands, and he went. In a minute I heard him singing. He had a swell voice. From the filling station I could just get a good view of the kitchen.[29]

Despite its simplicity and lack of affectation, this passage nevertheless carries much meaning. The curtness of the conversational exchange between Frank and Nick demarcates Nick's lack of fluency in English and the limits of their relationship. Frank's admission that he 'could just get a good view of the kitchen' from his place of work is suggestive, moreover, as it has already been established that Nick's shapely younger wife works there. Indeed, the use of the words 'could just' implies more than a modicum of effort on Frank's part. As it appears in Guthrie's writing, this style might be considered nostalgic, harking back to the moulds of classic American crime fiction. 'Could you be nostalgic for something you'd never experienced?' Pearce asks himself in *Hard Man*, before bluntly concluding 'Yeah, fucking right you could' (*HM*, 27). Admittedly, it is not a straightforward form of nostalgia, in the sense of creating feelings of warmth and homeliness, but Guthrie's

[29] James M. Cain, *The Postman Always Rings Twice* [1934] (London: Penguin, 1952), p. 7.

playful fetishization of the hard-boiled mode does express a kind of literary nostalgia for the styles of the past, and his choice of lurid content is perhaps even indicative of *nostalgia de la boue*.

Many critics argue that the quintessential hard-boiled style is strongly influenced by Ernest Hemingway (1899-1962), an author who, though not conventionally considered a crime writer, has written several texts that stray towards the realm of the genre. Examples of such works are *To Have and Have Not* (1937), a novel about a hard-working family man drawn into illegal activities due to bleak economic circumstances, and his short story 'The Killers' (1938), which was adapted into a classic film noir in 1946 by Robert Siodmak and again in 1964 by Don Siegel. Like *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, 'The Killers' uses a lean unembellished prose style, and its narrative and meaning emerges solely through action, dialogue, and descriptions of the material world:

> Outside it was getting dark. The street-lights came on outside the window. The two men at the counter read the menu. From the other end of the counter Nick Adams watched them. He had been talking to George when they came in.[30]

Many of his main characters are tough, stoical men, of a kind not alien to hard-boiled crime fiction. On the question of his 'terse, unrhetorical, unsentimental style of writing', Ken Worpole suggests, moreover, that 'it is certainly possible that Hemingway actually took his lessons from the early short-story writing of dime magazine writer Dashiell Hammett'.[31] It is with Hemingway, however, that the style

[30] Ernest Hemingway, 'The Killers' [1927], in Ernest Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories* (London: Arrow, 1993), pp. 267-277 (p. 267).
[31] Ken Worpole, *Dockers and Detectives* (London: Verso, 1983), p. 36.

is most associated and critically analysed. Carlos Baker uses Hemingway's own ice-berg metaphor in his analysis of the archetypal Hemingway style: 'The visible areas glint with the hard factual lights of the naturalist. The supporting structure, submerged and mostly invisible except to the patient explorer, is built with a different kind of precision – that of the poet-symbolist'.[32] In his essay 'The Tough Hemingway and his Hard-Boiled Children' (1968), Sheldon Norman Grebstein argues that Hemingway's 'tough style', a style which he also locates in the works of Hammett and Raymond Chandler, uses three basic elements:

> [F]irst, short and simple sentence constructions, with heavy use of parallelism, which convey the effect of control, terseness and blunt honesty; second, purged diction which above all eschews the use of bookish, Latinate, or abstract words and thus achieves the effect of being heard or spoken or transcribed from reality rather than appearing as a construct of the imagination (in brief, verisimilitude); and third, skillful use of repetition and a kind of verbal counterpoint, which operate either by pairing or juxtaposing opposites, or else by running the same phrase or word through a series of shifting meanings and inflections.[33]

Against the perception that the hard-boiled style is straightforward and objective, Baker's and Grebstein's analyses of Hemingway's tough prose reveal that the style is already subtly engaged in a dense intertextual network involving what Dentith calls 'the competitive relations between texts' and different modes of expression.

All three of these characteristics that Grebstein identifies are found throughout Guthrie's novels. Some of them are perhaps even more palpable in his writing than they are in Hemingway's. As is evident in the passage about Pearce

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[32] Carlos Baker, *Hemingway: The Writer as Artist* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), p. 117.
[33] Sheldon Norman Grebstein, 'The Tough Hemingway and His Hard-Boiled Children', in *Tough Guy Writers of the Thirties*, ed. by David Madden (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1968), pp. 18-41 (pp. 30-31).

quoted earlier, for instance, Guthrie's sentences can often be far shorter and simpler constructions than those found in Hemingway's fiction. The only uses of abstract or bookish language in Guthrie's work are the titles of the three chapters of *Slammer* (2009), 'Narrative Exposure Therapy', 'Confabulation', and 'Cognitive Dissonance', but in these instances the point seems to be the unsuitability of such specialized psychiatric language for describing the brutal and phantasmagoric experiences of the novel's main character, Nicholas Glass, whose grip on reality is as fragile as his surname. The minimalism and austerity of style continues to dominate some passages of Guthrie's work, however, even when the sentences get slightly longer, such as in this scene in *Kiss Her Goodbye* (2005):

> Joe adjusted the grip on his bat and slammed it into Billy's knuckles. With a grunt, Billy crumpled to the floor just like the quilt had done. Joe hit the boy's ankle, kneecap, elbow in quick succession. Quick double-handers. Not too much power. Probably didn't break more than a couple of bones.
>
> Billy screamed […]
>
> 'He's got the message.'
>
> Cooper shook Joe's hand off and took a swing. Something crunched when the bat hit Billy's face and Billy stopped screaming. Cooper said, 'Now he's got the message.'
>
> Joe nodded. Billy had got the message, all right. He was probably dreaming about it. If he could, he'd pay. If not, Joe and Cooper would be back. (*KHG*, 3)

The prose here very much exhibits the three characteristics that Grebstein presents as the defining features of Hemingway's 'tough style'. The sentences are mostly relatively short and simple, describing the action unemotionally and without empathy. Even where they are more complicated in technical terms, the effect is always still of an everyday, spoken style. The third sentence, for instance, uses the rhetorical device of asyndeton which, like Hemingway's habitual use of

polysyndeton, does not in any way obscure the meaning or bestow a literary or rhetorical sophistication, but instead simply contributes to the sense of pace. Similarly, the fourth, fifth, and sixth sentences are not grammatically sound but their meaning is easily understood because they reflect spoken use of language. The simple pairing of sentences 'Not too much power. Probably didn't break more than a couple of bones', moreover, carries much impact because the pain and damage of bones broken by a baseball bat is expressed in terms that are far less intense and far less emotive than would be expected. The word 'message' is repeated three times in the latter sentences of the passage, used first as a familiar, phrasal understatement and then with subtly increasingly levels of irony, before its rather absurd appearance in pronoun form: 'He was probably dreaming about it'. The shifting meanings and inflections in this reiteration illustrate Dentith's argument that parody is related to the 'to-and-fro of language'.

Guthrie's novels also frequently evoke the characteristics of a more quintessentially noirish style, in which the simplicity, control, and minimalism of the hard-boiled mode is abandoned in favour of more subjective, frenzied passages of writing, as discussed in this thesis's second chapter. These instances involve the use of fragmented language, disturbingly graphic descriptions of violence, hallucination, narrative deception, disrupted chronologies, and an overwhelming sense of absurdity. Although it is a definite presence in his earlier novels too, this dimension of Guthrie's writing is most powerfully brought out in his two most recent novels, *Savage Night* (2008) and *Slammer*, both of which use extremely tortuous, nonlinear narrative structures. *Savage Night* opens, for instance, with an episode called

'Savage Night: 10.30 PM. Fraser's', which describes a violent climactic murder, as focalized from the point of view of the victim Fraser Savage, but these events do not occur until near the end of the story.[34] The time sequence of episode itself, moreover, is also disrupted, beginning at half past ten, before filling in the earlier events of the evening in a flashback. Although the novel uses third-person narration throughout, each episode always sticks closely to the subjective experiences of the individual characters involved. The multiple subjective viewpoints and the calculated reconfiguration of the chronological sequence create a powerful impression of disorientation, but also posit an overwhelmingly fatalistic worldview in the sense the characters are nearly always entrapped in narrative patterns, of which the outcomes have already been decided. Some episodes are particularly surreal and utilize humour effectively, such as a scene in which a haemophobic, whose face is concealed with a balaclava, is required to menace a man with a samurai sword but is unable to draw blood without causing himself to black out (*SN*, 195-215). In a more disturbing and uncanny episode, a man and woman, naked except for transparent plastic gloves and booties, are graphically described mutilating two corpses with hacksaws: 'Martin had started on Savage's wrists. About a third of the way through the left one. The blade was sticking. She could hear it. A wet crunch. Pause. Another' (*SN*, 155). This heightened sense of unreality continues when Martin irrationally insists that the dismembered heads of the corpses are watching them from within carrier bags (*SN*, 154; 163; 167). He seems to have gone 'blood-simple', a concept introduced in Hammett's *Red Harvest* (1929) and

[34] Allan Guthrie, *Savage Night* [2008] (Edinburgh: Polygon, 2008), pp. 1-14. Subsequent references to this text will use this edition with the page numbers indicated in parenthesis.

extensively explored in the Coen brothers' semi-parodic neo-noir *Blood Simple* (1984), in which the main characters become irrational, paranoid, and disengaged from reality after committing a murder.[35]

As well as considering Guthrie's style and manner of representation, it is appropriate to examine the kinds of narratives and characters that his fiction typically follows, and to consider how these choices fit in with the conventions of the American sub-genres in question. The very first sentence of Guthrie's debut novel *Two-Way Split* (2004) introduces an example of the hard-boiled stock character type, the private eye: 'Four months and twenty-two days after he stopped taking his medication, Robin Greaves dragged the chair out from under the desk and sat down opposite the private investigator'[36]. Introducing the novel with this detective character sets up an expectation that he will be required by the narrative to investigate and solve a crime that will subsequently emerge in the course of the story. This expectation is promptly quelled, though, when the private investigator in question is revealed not as an example of that fantastical, archetypal hero associated with the American hard-boiled tradition, but instead as a seedy, unfit, sneering individual, whose assignment has been to shadow Robin's adulterous wife and document her infidelity (*TWS*, 4). Following the very short, initial episode, moreover, this private investigator is little more than a marginal presence in the narrative.

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[35] Hammett, *Red Harvest*, p. 142.
[36] Allan Guthrie, *Two-Way Split* [2004] (Edinburgh: Polygon, 2005), p. 1. Subsequent references to this text will use this edition with the page numbers indicated in parenthesis.

Alex Kennedy, another private investigator who works for the same agency, has a slightly bigger role to play in the novel, but here the traditional iconic image of the heroic private eye is even more directly defamiliarized:

> He'd become a PI for the excitement, the adventure, the danger. He blamed Hammett. Chandler, you could forgive. But Hammett? What a bastard […] PI novels had saturated Alex Kennedy's teenage years […] His favourite PIs were Max Thursday and Johnny Killain. Men who thrived on danger and excitement. Men who thought two-to-one was pretty fair odds. Men who could take on a brick wall and before long have it begging for mercy […] Hammett had been an investigator himself and should have known better. He had no excuse for making this shitty job seem exciting. Nothing happened. Nothing. Zero. Zilch. (*TWS*, 50)

Kennedy may be a disillusioned private eye, but he is certainly not one with the romantic connotations of cynical pragmatism that this phrase typically conjures up. The terse, overblown descriptions of superhuman private investigators, in the sentences beginning with the repeated words 'men who', seem consciously designed to imitate the sensational rhetoric of hard-boiled pulp novels. There is clearly a parodic dimension to the sense of excess that increases with each repetition of the phrase, ironizing the mode's parallelism and foregrounding the hard-boiled style as an artificial construct. Admittedly, however, the satirical impulse is partly obscured by an impression of affection and nostalgia about this kind of fiction. This impression aligns the effect with Jameson's negative characterization of pastiche rather than thorough-going parody. Although Kennedy later becomes embroiled in the novel's violent and exciting plot, it is not in his capacity as a private investigator and he does not assume anything like the kind of role he fantasizes about in the above passage. Instead, he emerges as a rather pitiable and ineffectual figure that looks 'about fifteen years old', turns out to have been primarily motivated by the

stolen money, and is witheringly told by Pearce 'Don't act so tough […] It doesn't suit you' (*TWS*, 201-203). The novel's unglamorous representation of private investigators is arguably more realistic than the traditional image of the hard-boiled private detective, a character type who is habitually and improbably called on to investigate cases of murder.

Indeed, in a Channel 4 television programme entitled *The American Cop* (1994), James Ellroy approvingly quotes the pithy assertion of fellow American crime writer Ed McBain that 'the last time a private eye investigated a homicide was never'.[37] McBain presumably makes this comment, however, in order to advocate his own chosen sub-genre, the police procedural, which his 87th Precinct novels have famously popularized since the 1950s. Ellroy, whose crime novels also make extensive use of police investigators, adds 'The private eye is an iconic totem spawned by pure fiction, romantic moonshine […] The American cop was the real goods from the gate'.[38] After *Two-Way Split*'s demystification of the private eye, however, Guthrie does not fill his investigator-shaped void with a police detective, as McBain, Ellroy, and many other crime writers have done. Indeed, Guthrie's police characters are similarly demystified, assuming not their conventional crime-fiction roles of law-enforcers or investigators of crime, but emerging mainly as hapless victims of crime, as in scenes in *Two-Way Split* and *Savage Night*, or as unprincipled violent thugs, as in one scene from *Kiss Her Goodbye* (2005).[39] In all of the above instances from Guthrie's fiction, the private investigator and the police

[37] James Ellroy, as quoted in *The American Cop*, dir. by Simon Fellows (Channel 4, 1994).
[38] Ellroy, *The American Cop*.
[39] See Guthrie, *Two-Way Split*, pp. 143-150; Allan Guthrie, *Savage Night*, pp. 241-248; Guthrie, *Kiss Her Goodbye*, pp. 43-47.

are represented from other characters' points of view. Unlike the majority of contemporary Scottish crime texts, Guthrie's novels do not centre on investigators or investigations. *Kiss Her Goodbye* does arguably however make use of an investigative dimension. The novel's main character, a downtrodden hired thug ironically named Joe Hope, is forced to investigate his wife's murder unofficially, not out of a sense of love or justice, but because he has been wrongly framed for the deed himself. Although he is by no means a conventional investigator figure, the narrative does seem to repeat the conventional plot-arc of a murder mystery, with the solving of the crime bringing a sense of narrative resolution. The investigative structure of *Kiss Her Goodbye* renders the novel a weaker example of Guthrie's work, however, partly because the revelation of the culprit is rather predictable. It also forces a sense of climax and privileges plot over the more interesting aspects of the novel, such as its self-consciously excessive and stylized mode of representation. In any case, Guthrie's fiction generally tends to follow the less formulaic stories of the other, often overlooked but nevertheless important, character types that populate the bleak world of hard-boiled and noir crime fiction. Lee Horsley identifies several of these types, when she points out that in these sub-genres, 'Private eyes play a part, but so do transgressors and victims, strangers and outcasts, tough women and sociable psychopaths. These are characters who *are* tarnished or afraid'.[40] It is worth pointing out that this last sentence is itself a parodic reworking of Raymond Chandler's famous characterization of the archetypal hard-boiled private eye.[41]

[40] Horsley, *The Noir Thriller*, p. 3.
[41] Raymond Chandler, 'The Simple Art of Murder' (1944), in Raymond Chandler, *The Simple Art of Murder* (New York: Vintage Crime, 1988), pp. 1-18 (p. 18).

It is useful to consider how a few of these character types function not only in terms of genre, but also how they participate simultaneously in various Scottish traditions. Robin Greaves, the main character in *Two-Way Split*, embodies several of the character types that Horsley cites. At different times, and in different ways, he constitutes a transgressor, a victim, an outcast, and a psychopath. Along with his wife Carol and his friend Eddie, Robin plans and takes part in an armed robbery of an Edinburgh Post Office, the central event that connects together all the hitherto discrete narrative threads. Certain aspects of the plot, and indeed the title, have precedent in Scottish crime fiction in the shape of Peter Turnbull Glasgow-based police procedurals *Big Money* (1984), which likewise concerns an armed robbery of a Post Office, and *Two Way Cut* (1988). Robin's main role in the text is not that of a generic small-time criminal. Rather, he conforms more closely to the archetypal psychopath of noir fiction. Robin's psychosis is made clear right from the very first scene of the novel, in which he initially seems only to fantasize about hitting the sneering private investigator discussed earlier. On observing the man's bleeding nose, though, he coolly questions what has happened:

> He stuck a cigarette to his bottom lip. Had he hit the poor man? Surely not. But there was no one else in the room and the PI hadn't assaulted himself, had he? Robin lit the cigarette. "I'm sorry," he told the cowering figure. (*TWS*, 5)

That Robin has to reason so circuitously to work out whether he has just hit someone hard enough on the nose to leave 'a dark red curve' (*TWS*, 5) of blood on the wallpaper behind them, reveals his dysfunctional psychological makeup early on in the narrative. It slowly emerges in the novel that he has a multiple personality

disorder, his personality being split between himself and his dead brother Donald, though neither of these identities are particularly stable or reasonable in themselves. Indeed, the typical formulation of the split personality in the crime genre tends to be a split between good and evil, powerfully manifested in examples such as Charles Laughton's *Night of the Hunter* (1955) or Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960). *Two-Way Split* provides an interesting twist on this convention, in that both sides of the character's personality are in fact psychotic murderers. During the novel, they both even murder the same woman. In one scene, Robin strangles his unfaithful wife Carol with a ligature and, thinking she's dead, begins ritualistically carving the word 'Love' into the flesh of her stomach with a knife, before blacking out (*TWS*, 113-118). In a later scene, he regains consciousness as Don and performs exactly the same actions on a slightly recovered Carol, but, this time, completing the deed (*TWS*, 122-125).

Robin's split personality is one of the few instances in Guthrie's work where a particular construction of Scottish identity is deliberately foregrounded. It invokes the split psyche paradigm. The title of Guthrie's novel neatly refers both to the protagonist's divided psyche, with its concomitant though arguably superficial Scottish associations, and to that very hard-boiled obsession with money that results in many of the characters arranging misguided alliances and pledging 'two-way splits' in order to get their hands on the takings of the post-office robbery (*TWS*, 113; 163; 203). Similarly, 'Robin Greaves' is a pun on 'robbing graves'. This crime has strong associations with Edinburgh in the shape of the city's nineteenth-century grave-robbers-turned-murderers, William Burke and William Hare, who are given a

fictional treatment in Stevenson's short story 'The Body Snatcher' (1884). Ian Rankin has suggested, moreover, that 'in Edinburgh, the typical crime is grave robbing', in the sense that, 'It's a very repressed city, a very Calvinist, Presbyterian place […] Things happen under cloak of darkness'.[42] Given the novel's Edinburgh setting and its treatment of the gothic double motif, then, Guthrie's choice of character name might deliberately evoke these connotations of darkness, secrecy, and repression. Punning or suggestive character names are also a staple of the American hard-boiled tradition, evident in examples such as Sam Spade, Mike Hammer, Lew Archer, John Shaft, and Thomas Magnum.

Two-Way Split implicitly suggests the very Calvinistic factor of suppressed guilt as a reason for Robin's psychiatric disorder when it is revealed that he was responsible for murdering his brother Don when he was only six years old (*TWS*, 198-201). The legacy of Calvinism in Scotland is overplayed, though, and its relevance to *Two-Way Split* is certainly limited. However, the split motif has been interpreted in a variety of different, non-religious contexts in recent Scottish thinking, such as Tom Nairn's various socio-political uses of it as part of his fascinating discussion about Scottish nationalism in *The Break-Up of Britain: The Crisis of Neo-Nationalism* (1977).[43] Another possible reason that the novel offers for Robin's psychosis is the emotional and physical abuse he suffered at the hands of his father. This abuse is revealed in a flashback, the context of which hints towards a different kind of division in Scottish culture related to the social and political

[42] J. Kingston Pierce, 'Ian Rankin: The Accidental Crime Writer' [an interview with Ian Rankin], *January Magazine* (2000) <http://januarymagazine.com/profiles/ianrankin.html> [accessed 22 September 2012].
[43] Tom Nairn, *The Break-Up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-Nationalism* (Altona: Common Ground Publishing Pty Ltd, 2003), pp. 115-183.

contexts discussed in the introduction and first chapter of this thesis. In the scene, Robin's father is driving him towards one of Britain's most prestigious music schools, following his securing of a bursary enabling him to learn classical piano:

> Dad said, 'This money the council have given you […] You'll be there for four years. That's twenty grand. Bleeding us tax payers of twenty grand, right? […] See, you've been sucking the life out of me most of your life. And for what? For all this arty-farty crap you and your mother like.' […]
>
> The slap stung his cheek. The second slap made his lip bleed. He shielded his face with his hands, tasting warm, salty blood.
>
> 'Pathetic,' his dad said. 'Fourteen years old and look at you, crying like a wee girl […] Can't even kick a football straight'. (*TWS*, 39)

The abuse that Robin suffers, almost certainly a factor in his later psychological disintegration, is the result of his father's brutal sense of class consciousness, a prominent feature of post-industrial Scottish culture. The episode reveals a severe disjuncture between Scotland's social classes, as expressed here through different cultural activities. Robin's father sees his son's talent for playing the piano as a cause for shame, because he considers it an effeminate, middle-class, elitist pursuit, which does not contribute to Scottish life in any physical and therefore worthwhile way. He likewise sees Robin's lack of ability in the more masculine, traditionally working-class activity of football to be equally reprehensible. It might be argued, then, that Robin's split personality is, at least partly, engendered by his father's warped images of class and masculinity, and the meanings they take on in post-industrial Scottish life. In this example, then, the novel's use of the split psyche paradigm might initially appear to be a rather superficial engagement with an anachronistic variant of Scottishness, as related to its psychological and religious contexts, but the introduction of this more politicized context gives it a deeper

resonance in terms of recent Scottish fiction, striking a thematic chord, for instance, with the work of William McIlvanney and Irvine Welsh.

The character's back-story also has resonances in the crime genre, echoing, for instance, James Toback's New Hollywood crime drama *Fingers* (1978). Toback's film stars Harvey Keitel as a schizophrenic character called Jimmy Fingers, again a suggestive and stylized character name. Jimmy is a dexterous classical pianist who also works as a loan shark for his Italian-American Mafioso father. Like Robin from *Two-Way Split*, Jimmy suffers from deep psycho-sexual dysfunction, is stranded between social classes because of the different allegiances of his parents, taking on his father's violent lifestyle and yet finding solace in his love of music which he has inherited from his mother. In what may be considered an act of what Linda Hutcheon calls '"play-giarism" or contextual free play', *Two-Way Split* even echoes certain specific details of *Fingers*, likewise using a main character called Carol (though with a different spelling) and prominently using the music of Johann Sebastian Bach, which Keitel's character is seen passionately playing throughout Toback's film: 'Hands hidden beneath the desk, he started to tap out Bach's Italian Concerto on his thighs, fingers making little slapping sounds against his trousers' (*TWS*, 1).[44] In its repetition of certain aspects of this American crime film, then, *Two-Way Split* again illustrates how these culturally American tropes can nevertheless still be made relevant when supplanted to a different Scottish context.

Constructions of post-industrial Scottishness are again brought into play in Guthrie's novels when another version of Scottish identity is depicted with the recurring character of Gordon Pearce. Pearce, who features in *Two-Way Split*, *Hard*

[44] Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody*, p. 5.

Man, and the novella *Kill Clock* (2007), shifts between several of the roles that Horsley suggests as stock character types of noir fiction. He is at times a transgressor but is mostly presented as a victim of circumstance. As with most of Guthrie's main characters, he is a social outsider who is known to engage in sudden acts of psychopathic violence. Like Robin's evocation of the Scottish split personality construction of identity, Pearce participates in the Scottish hard man tradition, which is discussed at length in the first chapter of this thesis. Pearce's parodic embodiment of the Scottish hard man archetype is clear from his first appearance in Guthrie's fiction, in which the narrator jokingly makes effective use of ironic understatement to reveal the character's histrionic toughness: 'Winter in Scotland was far too cold to walk around bare-chested. That's why Pearce wore a t-shirt' (*TWS*, 5).

Pearce's capacity for gratuitous violence is perhaps most conspicuously brought out in the opening scene of *Kill Clock*, though, in which he casually destroys a man's car in reaction to his road rage.[45] The man sounds his horn and shouts abuse at Pearce as he crosses the road with his three-legged dog Hilda. This action is enough to prompt Pearce to summon his physical prowess and sense of machismo to kick in the driver's side window, mount the bonnet and kick in the thick front windscreen, eject the driver from the car, smack the driver's head off the car's roof, and boldly drive the car into the wall of the local bus station. The narrator makes no gesture towards offering any balanced, external commentary on the incident, instead

[45] Allan Guthrie, *Kill Clock* [2007] (Edinburgh: Barrington Stoke Ltd., 2007), pp. 1-12. Subsequent references to this text will use this edition with the page numbers indicated in parenthesis.

simply assuming Pearce's perspective, evident in the way the damage and the driver are described:

> He turned off the engine, took out the keys. Un-clipped his belt. Stepped out to inspect the damage.
> Nice.
> The whole of the front driver's side was caved in […]
> The car's owner hadn't moved.
> Pearce stepped towards him, lobbed him the keys.
> The prick didn't even bother trying to catch them, just looked at the ground where they'd fallen. (*KC*, 12)

The novel does arguably suggest an impression of senselessness about the whole episode, though, in that it does not seem to have any function in, or connection to, the narrative that follows. It is especially striking that such a scene should be used to launch a high-concept crime novel of only 134 pages, a form which sets up an expectation of tight plotting and certainly suggests that the opening scene will be more than marginally connected to the narrative. Even within the context of a stylized pastiche, a troubling celebratory quality about the scene is nevertheless easy to detect in its representation of violence as a liberating and cathartic antidote to the arrogance and impatience of the modern world, manifest in Pearce's brusque conclusion that 'These days, everyone was a rude fuck' (*KC*, 4). The novel here seems to imitate its source material too closely and affectionately, and it is thus lacking in sufficient critical distance as to be an entirely effective approach to the archetype. The celebratory mood is obviously problematic because the tradition of the Scottish hard man offers damaging and illusory images of working-class masculinity.

As the title indicates, the concept of the Scottish hard man is explored more extensively in *Hard Man*. In this novel, Pearce is pitted against a rival hard man in the shape of Wallace, whose name carries certain connotations of mythic heroism in Scottish culture: 'When [Pearce] thought of Wallace, he thought of William Wallace. Braveheart' (*HM*, 124). An overtly psychopathic and violent character, Wallace arguably conforms even more closely to the excesses of the hard man stereotype than Pearce: 'Always helped your rep if people thought you were a psycho. He wore glasses, and hard men didn't wear glasses, so he had to work twice as hard to maintain his rep' (*HM*, 167-168). It is further revealed that he is extremely proud of a scar on his stomach, caused by holding 'a scalding-hot steam iron there for thirty seconds without flinching' (*HM*, 168) in order to prove a point to a friend. Wallace's concern with his reputation and status as a hard man is taken to a parodically pathological degree, reminiscent of the razor-wielding psychopathic protagonist Johnnie Stark from A. McArthur and H. Kingsley Long's *No Mean City* (1935). Echoing Pearce's bringing into play of Mel Gibson's *Braveheart* (1995), Wallace's wife May is given a 'Scottish Dirk' from her brother for protection, and she reflects 'That was nice […] It was a while since she'd had a present even if he'd no doubt bought it from a souvenir shop on the Royal Mile' (*HM*, 167), again touching on the film's problematic commodification of a violent and anachronistic version of Scottishness, which is itself closely related to the tradition of Scottish hard man. Guthrie's sporadic allusions to Scottishness, then, can generate far-reaching meanings within these ostensibly generic texts.

Allan Guthrie's excessive crime novels are, for the most part, effective pastiches of the hard-boiled and noir variants of the crime genre. His fiction repeats and develops the conventions of these sub-genres, including their narrative styles, modes of representation, narrative patterns, and character types. One key aspect of hard-boiled and noir crime fiction that his novels do not repeat, however, is the rigorous engagement with the specificities of place and time. Indeed, any socio-political commentary in Guthrie's novels is somewhat perfunctory. There are several instances in his novels where distinctively Scottish models of identity are consciously invoked, however, and these constructions form hybrids with analogous stock character types of Americanized modes of crime fiction. The trans-contextualization of aspects from these modes might not be sufficiently ironic as to offer thorough-going parody but it often creates a suggestive interface between American and Scottish models of national identity.

Christopher Brookmyre

As intimated by the analysis of the opening chapter of *Quite Ugly One Morning* that introduces this chapter, the fiction of Christopher Brookmyre offers a very different approach to Scottish crime fiction compared to the writers examined so far in this thesis. His work currently consists of two ongoing series and several standalone novels, all of which contribute to the field of crime fiction, even if they do not always meticulously fulfil generic conventions. Indeed, in an early interview with

Brookmyre from the *Edinburgh Review* (1999), he expresses a certain hesitancy about his work being identified, without further qualification, as crime fiction:

> My own books are crime novels in as much as criminal activity is central to the plot, but my milieux and dramatis personae tend not to resemble what the genre usually connotes. I think it is a testament to how widely encompassing (and thus perhaps meaningless) the term 'crime' is that from Scotland alone there are writers as diverse in scope, content, tone and style as Ian Rankin, Val McDermid, Denise Mina, Douglas Lindsay, Manda Scott and myself, to name but six.[46]

In terms of the wider contexts that inform this chapter, Brookmyre seems to stress the difference rather than the repetition when describing his work's relation to crime fiction, insinuating that his participation in the genre is almost accidental. It is also rather remarkable that he parenthetically suggests that the identification of 'crime' as a genre might be meaningless. Arguably, it is in fact his work's relation, admittedly often subversive and irreverent, to the crime genre that gives it much of its driving force and distinctive flavour.

Brookmyre's main series, which currently comprises five novels, beginning with *Quite Ugly One Morning*, follows a Glaswegian investigative journalist of preternatural perspicacity, doggedness, and agility named Jack Parlabane. Brookmyre exploits his protagonist's professional position well throughout the series, and Parlabane emerges as an amalgamation of fictional character types such as private detective and spy, though without the professional or generic constraints of either. His investigations typically revolve around establishment figures and institutional corruption, and therefore frequently lead him into trouble. While this précis of the series might make it sound rather hackneyed, certain aspects of

[46] Brookmyre, 'Plots are for Cemetaries', p. 48.

Parlabane and the world he inhabits are presented in such a self-consciously heightened, far-fetched, and often grotesque way that the novels are able to stand in ironic relation to more conventional examples of the genre. For this reason, Mikhail Bakhtin's ground-breaking study *Rabelais and his World* (1965) provides a particularly useful set of critical contexts for examining Brookmyre's work, especially when considered in light of the wider concerns of this chapter. Bakhtin's text argues that the work of French renaissance writer François Rabelais (c. 1494-1553) is to be valued because it brings to life, in literary form, various culturally important aspects of the mediaeval carnival spirit that have otherwise been lost or compromised. Bakhtin praises Rabelais's use and understanding of folk humour, popular culture, the grotesque, caricature, parody of all things official, emphasis on the human body, general democratic spirit of exuberance, and raw, unpolished, open-ended aesthetic strategies. The term that Bakhtin uses to refer to this range of qualities is 'carnivalesque'. Since Brookmyre's novels skilfully embrace many of the same characteristics that Bakhtin identifies as a positive driving force in Rabelais's work, though admittedly applying them in completely different contexts, *Rabelais and his World* offers some intriguing and productive lines of enquiry to a reading of Brookmyre's oeuvre.

The bodily humour throughout *Quite Ugly One Morning* provides various illuminating examples that illustrate the relevance of Bakhtin's study to Brookmyre's distinctive brand of crime fiction and which also further contribute to this chapter's discussion of parody in Scottish crime fiction. Even within Brookmyre's scatological corpus, *Quite Ugly One Morning* is extraordinarily fixated

on faeces, the act of defecation, and bodily function in general. Indeed, all of the key moments in the novel's narrative arc are punctuated by variations on this theme, a topic to be explored further shortly. In his study, Bakhtin emphasizes Rabelais's striking representations of the human body and its sundry impolite functions, praising his writing precisely for not recoiling from such natural, lowbrow, and indeed humorous aspects of life that, in certain social and historical circumstances, would be considered too base and disgusting to be rendered in any kind of literary discourse:

> [I]n Rabelais's work the material bodily principle, that is, images of the human body with its food, drink, defecation, and sexual life, plays a predominant role. Images of the body are offered, moreover, in an extremely exaggerated form [...] In grotesque realism, therefore, the bodily element is deeply positive. It is presented not in a private, egotistic form, severed from the other spheres of life, but as something universal, representing all the people [...] all that is bodily becomes grandiose, exaggerated, immeasurable.[47]

Images of the human body and its functions certainly play an important role in Brookmyre's work, and they are likewise treated with comic exaggeration beyond natural proportions and represented in a 'deeply positive' way, generating great mirth and undercutting the typically grave scenarios of crime fiction. Of particular relevance to Brookmyre's astonishing emphasis on faecal matter, then, is Bakhtin's observation of Rabelais that 'he conceived excrement as both joyous and sobering matter, at the same time debasing and tender; it combined the grave and birth in their lightest, most comic, least terrifying form' (*RAHW*, 175-176). The otherwise horrific and potentially disturbing crime scene that opens the novel, discussed briefly at the

[47] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, trans. by Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), pp. 18-19. All subsequent references to this text will use this edition with the page numbers indicated in parenthesis.

start of this chapter, has a drolly unexpected 'big keech' at its heart, tenderly described in great detail and surprisingly elaborate figurative language (*QUOM*, 5). Like the deliberate misuse of wine-tasting terminology earlier in the same chapter, the absurdly lavish images used to describe 'the turd' bring into play an incongruous gentility and even a perverse sense of the majestic: 'like a huge rum truffle with too much cocoa powder in the mixture'; 'It sat proudly in the middle of the mantelpiece like a favourite ornament'; 'an appropriate monarch of what it surveyed' (*QUOM*, 5-6). Indeed, this last metaphor expresses a feature of that Bakhtin identifies as part of the carnival's 'peculiar logic of the "inside out"': that of 'comic crownings and uncrownings' (*RAHW*, 11). Indeed, it suggests that a particularly elastic world-view underpins Brookmyre's work if the statuses of excrement and a monarch can be figuratively switched. This kind of taboo overturning of decorum again reflects the carnival spirit, in that is filled with the 'pathos of change and renewal, with the sense of the gay relativity of prevailing truths and authorities' (*RAHW*, 11). The grotesque content of the novel's opening chapter allows one final opportunity for a comic degradation of the typically sanitized official rhetoric of police procedure, and indeed of a generic cliché, as Inspector McGregor declares 'This jobbie is state evidence and is officially under the jurisdiction of Lothian and Borders Police' (*QUOM*, 6).

The novel's emphasis on bodily function and its concomitant undermining of the crime genre continues with brio and exuberance into the novel's second chapter with the debut appearance of Parlabane. His first act of investigation in the series takes place when he wakes up very badly hung-over in the flat above the malodorous

crime scene outlined in the opening chapter. Registering the vile bodily smells coming from the flat below, Parlabane initially suspects that he has drunkenly vomited:

> He felt a draught and saw that the window was open, which snapped a piece of the puzzle into place, but suggested the completed picture would not be pretty. He remembered getting up and opening it at some point during the night to let the smell out, and figured he must have spewed but been too incapacitated to clear it up at the time. The source of his panic was that he couldn't remember where he had thrown up, indeed couldn't recall the act at all. (*QUOM*, 7)

He subsequently embarks on a misguided 'quest' in the flat to locate what he presumes to be his own vomit, interpreting clues such as his abandoned foil take-away cartons, and searching deep in the recesses of his befuddled memory (*QUOM*, 8). The first episode featuring Parlabane thus presents a very small-scale, ironic inversion of the amnesiac thriller, a sub-genre of noir exemplified by films such as Anthony Mann's *Two O'Clock Courage* (1945), Joseph L. Mankiewicz's *Somewhere in the Night* (1946), and Christopher Nolan's *Memento* (2000). While the typical protagonists of such texts are compelled to throw themselves into profound investigations in order to re-discover fundament aspects of their own identities or to solve crimes of which they have been accused, Parlabane's initial 'quest' to discover the source of a foul smell is ironically rather more limited in scope and importance. Contributing further to the farcical nature of this episode, Parlabane subsequently becomes locked out of his flat in his underwear and gets caught trying to pass through the crime scene in order to climb back into his flat, setting in motion his personal involvement in the case. Introducing the investigative hero of a crime series in such a strikingly low-key, non-dramatic fashion works to

liberate the reader from generic preconceptions and encourages more open-ended ways of reading. The passage also exploits reader expectations well, comically undermining the generic notions of heroism and non-conformism engendered by the blurb on the novel's dust jacket: 'an investigative journalist of unusual tenacity and morally ambiguous methods' (*QUOM*, cover). Parlabane's debut provides an appropriately flippant, small-scale example of a quality that Bakhtin commends in Rabelais's work: 'These images are opposed to all that is finished and polished, to all pomposity, to every ready-made solution in the sphere of thought and world outlook' (*RAHW*, 3). The novel also demonstrates that the human body and its indecorous functions are 'something universal, representing all the people', when it introduces its antagonist Stephen Lime, the deeply corrupt Chief Executive of the Midlothian National Health Service Trust and all-round pantomime villain. As with Parlabane's debut, Lime's introduction is founded on Brookmyre's brand of detailed and specific toilet humour: 'Stephen Lime lay back in his bath and farted contentedly to himself. If he pressed his chubby legs together just the right way, he could send the bubbles rolling along beneath him until they emerged between his ankles near the taps' (*QUOM*, 19).

The counterpart scene to the novel's opening is a short flashback episode focalized from hit man Darren Mortlake's point of view, which reveals the gruesome murder. This flashback also naturally extends the text's scatological emphasis further into what should, generically speaking, otherwise constitute one of the narrative's most climatic scenes. Mortlake bitterly recalls Lime's thwarted instructions that the murder 'was supposed to look like suicide [...] there should be

no mess whatsoever' (*QUOM*, 41). Contrary to these instructions, the murder becomes a chaotic, farcical scene after the professional hit man accidentally sticks a syringe of tranquilizer into his own forehead, resulting in a gory, sensational fight between him and the victim, in which he has one of his fingers bitten off. Mortlake realises that the police are now unlikely to be deceived into thinking that Dr. Slaughter committed suicide, because of the general disorder of the flat and the fact that the corpse will now show obvious traces of their fracas. He therefore comes up with a grotesque but highly imaginative solution, which seems to be formulated in his mind as a parodic reworking of Ezra Pound's modernist manifesto:

> Then he had his flash of inspiration, his moment of genius.
> Make it weird.
> Confuse the Filth. Get the bastards guessing [...] When he trashed a place in his youth he usually liked to shit on the floor somewhere, a nice centrepiece to the surprise the poor suckers were coming home to. It wasn't a unique calling card, everyone did it. The Filth knew that too. So if he left a turd they'd be sure it was a burglary [...] he felt another wave of anger, and grabbed at the liability's right hand, gnashing and chewing at the index finger until the bone was exposed and he could snap it off.
> Make it weird, he remembered.
> He stuck the finger up one of the liability's nostrils. Then he repeated the drill with the other hand.
> Right. Done.
> His anger extinguished, his rage calmed, he simultaneously caught a whiff of his turd and a taste of the liability's flesh and vomited copiously over the radiator. (*QUOM*, 43-44)

The shambolic fight scene and this messy, stomach-churning outcome can be read as a thorough-going ironic inversion of the 'perfect murder' narrative, a sub-genre of crime fiction in which the crime is meticulously planned, exemplified by Cain's *The Postman Always Rings Twice* and *Double Indemnity* (1943), Patricia Highsmith's *Strangers on a Train* (1950), Hitchcock's *Dial M for Murder* (1954), and Billy

Wilder's *Witness for the Prosecution* (1957). Indeed, contributing further to the inanity of the scene and its parodic relation to this kind of conventional murder mystery, Mortlake's surreal, desperate and ham-fisted solution to his dilemma almost succeeds precisely because of its preposterousness. There is a similar scene in Brookmyre's later novel *Boiling a Frog* (2000) in which a Catholic priest and a corrupt spin doctor are forced to kill a witness to their crime and decide to cover their tracks by disguising the murder as an outrageous sexually-motivated sacrifice: 'Headless corpse in gay horror murder. The papers'll think it's Christmas, an' the polis'll be lookin' for some lone pervert'.[48] The above scene from *Quite Ugly One Morning* also embodies what Bakhtin sees as another important Rabelaisian trope:

> All these convexities and orifices have a common characteristic; it is within them that the confines between bodies and between the body and the world are overcome [...] Eating, drinking, defecation and other elimination (sweating, blowing of the nose, sneezing) as well as copulation, pregnancy, dismemberment, swallowing up by another body – all these acts are performed on the confines of the body and the outer world. (*RAHW*, 317)

The murder scene from *Quite Ugly One Morning* brings into play several of the bodily convexities and orifices that Bakhtin mentions, such as the mouth, nose, fingers, and anus, all related together in the one fantastic event. The depicted actions involving these bodily parts and openings, including biting each other's fingers off, inserting the amputated digits into the victim's nose, vomiting, and defecation, all contribute to an overblown, comical version of death. While Louise Welsh's novel *The Cutting Room* (2002) depicts the horror of murder turning a human being into a

[48] Christopher Brookmyre, *Boiling a Frog* [2000] (London: Little, Brown and Company, 2000), p. 293. Subsequent references to this text will use this edition with the page number indicated in parenthesis.

thing, as explored in the second chapter of this thesis, the death scene from *Quite Ugly One Morning* undercuts any sense of fear by presenting the act of murder alongside more outlandish, carnivalesque instances of a similar process. The fingers, excrement, and vomit, for instance, all make the transition from human to inanimate object.

Finally, a later flashback that reveals key details about Parlabane's back-story also revolves around the act of defecation. It is divulged that his recent return to Scotland from Los Angeles was because of a deliberate attempt on his life by an anonymous hit man waiting in his apartment for him. It is in fact this experience that motivates his curiosity about the novel's main murder case. The way that Parlabane recalls the experience is remarkable when considered in the context of thischapter, not to mention the fact that it was only because he desperately needed the toilet that he was able to make it past the hit man on his way in and find the gun that his friend had hidden in the cistern in case of such emergencies:

> Remembered not as if in a distant past, not even as if it had happened to someone else, but a scene in a movie, in that city of movies.
> Unfortunately the director seemed to be been Quentin Tarantino rather than, say, Zalman King. (*QUOM*, 162)

> That was what saved him. Not reacting, not acknowledging.
> He pulled out his keys and fumbled at the lock, his stomach lurching a little as if suddenly impatient at the thought of the proximity of a familiar toilet bowl. (*QUOM*, 164)

> He flushed the toilet to cover the sound and lifted the cistern lid, barely daring to breathe, almost unable to look.
> Jesus. His future – life or death – was metaphorically in his hands, but literally what was in his hands was part of a cludgie (*QUOM*, 166)

As the novel itself indicates, this flashback echoes a scene from Tarantino's overblown, parodic neo-noir *Pulp Fiction* (1994) in which a hit man is killed because he goes to the toilet, foolhardily leaving his gun on his intended victim's kitchen worktop. The above scene from *Quite Ugly One Morning* also recalls the dramatic climax of Francis Ford Coppola's glossy, stylized gangster epic *The Godfather* (1972), in which Michael Corleone retrieves a gun from a cistern in the toilet of an Italian restaurant and uses it to kill members of a rival family, completing the character's development from upstanding citizen to fully fledged Mafioso. The toilet scene from *Quite Ugly One Morning* activates parallels with these well-known crime texts, which themselves occupy an interesting position in terms of their relation to more sincere or realist examples of the genre. Brookmyre's text undercuts even the hyper-real, nostalgic cinematic aesthetics of *The Godfather* and the playful, knowing postmodern games of *Pulp Fiction* by elevating Parlabane's diarrhoea to such a significant, dramatic role in the scene and the novel.

There is also a transatlantic dimension involved here in the incorporation of an additional setting to Edinburgh: Los Angeles. This city provides the setting for countless hard-boiled crime novels and film noirs, including Chandler's Philip Marlowe series. These are the main sub-genres that the Jack Parlabane novels ironically trans-contextualize to contemporary Scotland, furnishing them with an anarchic, exuberant sense of humour and figuratively defecating on any pomposity or pretensions to grittiness that these modes might harbour. The irony in Brookmyre's work cuts both ways, though, and he exploits the suspense of these American modes by introducing deeply puerile, facetious aspects to them when

transferred to a new Scottish context. As Brookmyre himself points out, these more humorous, earthy aspects might appear to detract from his work's engagement with Scotland and its sense of itself, but they in fact foster open, positive approaches to the crime genre and the representation of society:

> [H]umour becomes a bulwark against the reader taking too seriously what are admittedly outlandish plots and incidents. I would agree that crime fiction expresses much about how a society understands itself, and would go further to say that it is the idiom best suited to such an examination [...] However, I'm not vain enough to think my work is capable of laying bare a nation's soul, so irreverence provides a healthy sense of perspective.[49]

The parodic and semi-parodic renditions of culturally American crime fiction that are found in the work in Allan Guthrie and Christopher Brookmyre generate meaning in the way that, according to Sue Vice's reading of Bakhtin, meaning is always generated: 'by a repetition of a structure or utterance in a new context, or with altered content'.[50] This process has a particular relevance within the contexts of genre and parody, of course, since these modes bring the act of repetition to the surface. The work of both Guthrie and Brookmyre, then, in some sense dramatizes the appeal that the hard-boiled and noir modes exert upon Scotland's contribution to the crime genre. These sub-genres are already characterized by a celebration of all that is unofficial, off the record, impolite, larger than life, populist, and anti-authoritarian. Parodic discourse merely extends many of these qualities beyond their natural conclusions. Parody and pastiche also enlarge the possibilities of these sub-genres by introducing carnivalesque qualities and by undercutting the cynicism of

[49] Brookmyre, 'Plots are for Cemetaries', p. 50.
[50] Sue Vice, *Introducing Bakhtin* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), p. 224.

the hard-boiled mode and the petrifying gothic anxieties of noir. Even when these aspects are represented in the parodic examples, they are crucially represented as a posture or an artificial construct. This very textual nature of pastiche and parody, however, does mean that these modes sacrifice something of the apparent authenticity with which the texts examined in this thesis's first two chapters approach Scottishness and the crime genre. The fact that intertextuality, parody, and pastiche are all integral to textuality in the contemporary world in general, however, raises the question of whether any text can be authentically Scottish. This sense of artificiality about nation and genre is taken even further, though in a tonally opposite direction, in the texts analysed in this thesis's final chapter. This last instalment addresses the nature, impact and significance of the more genteel, whimsical, soft-boiled side of contemporary Scottish crime fiction.

4. The Crime of Miss Jean Brodie: Gentility and Whimsy in the Jolly Murder Mysteries of M. C. Beaton and Kate Atkinson

The second novel in Kate Atkinson's Jackson Brodie series *One Good Turn* (2006), which is mischievously subtitled 'A Jolly Murder Mystery', features a character called Martin Canning who writes clue-puzzle detective stories of a homely, familiar sort:

> They were old-fashioned, soft-boiled crime novels featuring a heroine called 'Nina Riley', a gung-ho kind of girl who had inherited a detective agency from her uncle. The books were set in the Forties, just after the war. It was an era in history Martin felt particularly drawn to, the monochrome deprivation of it, the undertow of seedy disappointment in the wake of heroism [...] Nina lived in a geographically vague version of Scotland that contained sea and mountains and rolling moorland, all within a fast drive of every major town in Scotland [...] When he wrote the first Nina Riley book he had conceived it as an affectionate nod in the direction of an earlier time and an earlier form. 'A pastiche, if you will,' he said nervously, when he was introduced to his editor at the publishing house. 'A kind of ironic *homage*' [...] 'Be that as it may,' she said, making a visible effort to look at him, 'what I see is a book I can sell. A sort of jolly murder mystery. People *crave* nostalgia, the past is like a drug'.
>
> It was innocuous stuff, depicting a kind of retro-utopian Britain that was rife with aristocrats and gamekeepers – although no one ever seemed to have sex (which would fit with Martin's neutered air). It was a nonsensical kind of setting where murders were tidy affairs that resulted in inoffensive corpses, the stuff of Sunday evening television, the equivalent of a hot bath and a warm mug of cocoa. The serfs weren't revolting, they were positively happy in their chains, and the rank smell of death didn't corrupt the genteel, heather-scented air around Nina Riley's head. *'Don't go in there, Miss Riley,' the gillie said, 'it's no' a sight for a bonnie young lassie's eyes'*.[1]

[1] Kate Atkinson, *One Good Turn: A Jolly Murder Mystery* [2006] (London: Transworld Publishers, 2007), pp. 24-26, 453-454. Subsequent references to this text will use this edition with the page numbers indicated in parenthesis.

These fictionalized representations of the traditional detective story, focalized by Martin himself in the first passage and by Jackson Brodie in the latter, draw attention to the key concerns of this final chapter, which focuses on Scottish appropriations of culturally English golden-age crime fiction. Although, as with previous chapters, the primary material in question participates in a non-indigenous, now internationally-standardized sub-genre, there are nevertheless still distinctively Scottish resonances in the texts. These resonances arise through conscious attempts to hybridize the form with peculiarly Scottish traditions and because new meanings are incidentally generated when the form is transposed to a Scottish context.

The above passages from *One Good Turn*, then, helpfully introduce the wider contexts of this chapter. Of course, the terms in which the fictional Nina Riley series is described in these extracts are hardly flattering. Characteristically well-observed and sparklingly expressed, these belittling descriptions convey Martin's detective series as a blandly comforting, outmoded, nostalgic, and frivolous confection of golden-age clichés, bereft of artistic or social relevance and lacking in ideological insight. They are, to borrow a phrase from the comically arch narrator of David Aitken's Dundee crime novel *Sleeping with Jane Austen* (2000), 'pabulum for the perm set'.[2] *One Good Turn* also emphasizes that, in spite of this apparent absence of any literary or social significance, the Nina Riley stories are well-liked and commercially successful: Martin's agent tells him that the sales remain 'buoyant' even by the seventh novel in the series and, in a move later echoed by Atkinson herself in 2011, Martin is able to sell the television rights of his detective series to the BBC (*OGT*, 26-27). Although popular and highly lucrative, Martin's

[2] David Aitken, *Sleeping with Jane Austen* [2001] (Harpenden: No Exit Press, 2001), p. 20.

books are presented as disposable entertainments 'to be read and immediately forgotten in beds and hospitals, on trains, planes, benches' (*OGT*, 30). They seem to aspire to do nothing more than amuse and reassure. These intensely unfashionable objectives are at odds with the range of important literary and social ambitions harboured by the kinds of contemporary crime fiction discussed in the first three chapters of this thesis. These aspirations to amuse or reassure are nevertheless significant in the context of contemporary Scottish crime fiction. Conveyed in the above passages through the subtly ironic use of terms such as 'innocuous' and 'inoffensive', for instance, Atkinson's narration archly recognizes that even the most conformist, apolitical, and cosy examples of crime fiction still reveal much about the society in which they were produced, through the values and assumptions that underlie the texts and the fantasies that they seem to indulge. The commercial appeal of the soft-boiled mode, which the passages about the Nina Riley series take pains to emphasize, makes this covert content particularly significant.

This chapter, then, addresses examples of golden-age and soft-boiled crime fiction emerging from Scotland since the 1980s. Like the American hard-boiled and noir forms, though less critically fashionable, these culturally English sub-genres are the subject of global recognition and international commercial success, spawning many imitations and appropriations around the world. The business of this chapter is to consider whether recent Scottish examples appropriate the English style wholesale, blankly repeating its conventions, tone, stylistic elements, values and assumptions, or whether some examples are distinctively Scottish despite their participation in an international phenomenon. The texts under consideration here

resist the trends delineated in this thesis's first three chapters, undermining the popular assumptions that recent Scottish crime fiction has been wholly dark, politicized, aggressive, and has exclusively appropriated the culturally American variants of the genre. These popular assumptions are now so ingrained that it might seem surprising to include a chapter focussed on the golden-age and soft-boiled variants of Scottish crime fiction in this thesis. Indeed, in a recent interview with Len Wanner, Ian Rankin stresses the sheer diversity of Scottish crime fiction but explicitly rejects any considerable influence of these culturally English traditions:

> [W]e're doing a lot more than just trying to tell a good story that will keep you engaged on a train journey so that at the end you'll go, "Ach, *that's* who the killer was." I think quite a lot of writers in Scotland aren't that interested in the traditional notion of the English detective story, the structured novel that's full of red herrings and in the penultimate chapter the detective gets all the possible suspects together in a room and explains who did it and who didn't do it.
>
> There don't seem to be many novels like that coming out of Scotland.[3]

Rankin's remarks on the English detective story do not do justice to the variety and complexities of golden-age crime fiction. His rejection of the English tradition is, however, representative of that of many contemporary Scottish crime writers. Val McDermid, for instance, argues that 'It's clear from the difference in tone and style between us and our English counterparts that our roots are in very different soils. For English crime writers, the Golden Age of Christie, Sayers and Allingham casts a long shadow'.[4] In line with the arguments presented in this thesis's first three chapters, the golden-age murder mystery would intuitively seem to be particularly

[3] Ian Rankin, as quoted in Len Wanner, *Dead Sharp: Scottish Crime Writers on Country and Craft* (Isle of Lewis: Two Ravens Press, Ltd., 2011), p. 5.
[4] Val McDermid, 'This Year's Hot Look: Tartan Noir', *The Times*, 6 August 2008, p. 3.

un-Scottish in terms of its concern with bourgeois and upper-class characters, its rarefied social milieux, its tendency for enclosed rural settings, and its artificiality. However, this type of crime fiction actually has far deeper roots in Scottish fiction than hard-boiled and noir fiction, which, aside from the false start of *No Mean City* (1935), does not really emerge in Scotland until *Laidlaw* in 1977. It is therefore worth initially providing a brief survey of the earlier Scottish texts that are relevant to this chapter.

There are several examples of Victorian Scottish crime fiction, for instance, that have much in common with later golden-age crime fiction. Although written by an English author, Wilkie Collins's sensation novel *The Law and the Lady* (1875), for example, revolves around the 'not proven' verdict peculiar to Scots Law. It is a lightly gothic mystery narrative about Valeria Brinton, a young newly-wed who discovers that her new husband was put on trial for his first wife's murder and found 'not proven'. This verdict leaves him under permanent suspicion and leads Valeria to conduct an amateur investigation, offering one of the earliest examples of a female investigator figure. The novel provides a precursor to a range of twentieth-century British soft-boiled suspense texts involving suspicious wives in mismatched marriages including Agatha Christie's short story 'The Thumb Mark of St. Peter' (1932), Daphne du Maurier's novel *Rebecca* (1938), Alfred Hitchcock's film *Suspicion* (1941), and Thorold Dickinson's film *Gaslight* (1940), later remade by George Cukor in 1944. While the Scottishness of *The Law and the Lady* is questionable because of the author's nationality, the Scottishness of Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories (1887-1927) is uncertain for the opposite reason,

being written by a Scottish author but set mostly in London. The Sherlock Holmes stories, and the kind of nineteenth-century analytical detective fiction that they exemplify, occupy the same kind of cause-and-effect world of clues, deductive reasoning, character observation, and problem-solving that come to dominate the English interwar murder mystery. As discussed in this thesis's introduction, however, there are several aspects of the Sherlock Holmes stories that do not fit with the golden-age model such as Holmes being a misanthropic outsider and a drug addict, the series' mainly urban settings, and the gothic aspects of the texts. Alison Light, whose work is discussed in more depth below, makes further distinctions between Victorian detective fiction and the golden-age murder mystery in terms of their conflicting articulations of masculinity and nationalism.[5] Edinburgh detective James McLevy's case-notes, published in the 1860s, and J. E. Preston Muddock's Dick Donovan stories (1889-1922) provide other examples of Victorian Scottish detective series that have more in common with the English style than with the culturally American variants, featuring such golden-age tropes as locked-room mysteries and revolving around problem-solving.

Although not participating in the crime genre, the Kailyard school of Scottish fiction, represented by late nineteenth-century stories by J. M. Barrie, Ian Maclaren, and S. R. Crockett, bears some resemblance to the English golden-age murder mystery, being popular, narrative-driven, centring on close-knit communities, and indulging in rural myth-making. Both forms are also considered, sometimes unfairly, to be conservative, nostalgic, and unwilling to deal with modernity, so they have

[5] Alison Light, *Forever England: Femininity, literature and conservatism between the wars* (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 74-75. Subsequent references to this text will use this edition with the page numbers indicated in parenthesis.

also been the subject of much derision and caricature. Kailyardism and the familiar twee constructions of Scottish identity associated with it have already been extensively covered in Scottish cultural criticism in studies such as Ian Campbell's *Kailyard* (1981), Tom Nairn's *The Break-Up of Britain* (1977), and Andrew Nash's more positive account *Kailyard and Scottish Literature* (2007). As shall become increasingly evident in this chapter, Campbell's following remarks on the Kailyard can be readily applied to the golden-age murder mystery:

> The advantages of [rural and small-town] settings lie in the interpersonal relations which can be established and continued, with a relatively small cast, [and] an almost oppressive knowledge of community affairs [...] The advantages of the recent past to the Kailyard writer are obvious. In a time of rapid change they permit the preservation of vanishing values, the relaxation for city dwellers of escapist reading in the country setting.[6]

Both Campbell and Nairn point out, moreover, that the Kailyard is no longer historically or geographically confined, still going strong in contemporary Scottish popular culture and often emerging in more urban settings, such as the long-running folksy D. C. Thomson comic strips *The Broons* (1936-present) and *Oor Wullie* (1936-present). Confirming the nostalgic, homely nature of these strips, a *Scotsman* review of the 2005 *Broons* annual was humorously headed 'Crivvens! It's Dundee in Aspic'.[7] This striking, if somewhat sickly, image of a setting remaining preserved in the congealed, gelatinous substance used in pies and pasties, is frequently applied to golden-age detective fiction too. In her defence of Christie's work, Alison Light

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[6] Ian Campbell, *Kailyard* (Edinburgh: Ramsay Head Press, 1981), pp. 86-87.
[7] 'Crivvens! It's Dundee in Aspic', *Scotsman*, 11 December 2005 <http://www.scotsman.com/news/crivvens-it-s-dundee-in-aspic-1-1406340> [accessed 22 September 2012]. See Light, *Forever England*, p. 62.

points out that 'Watching any of the recent dramatisations featuring "Miss Marple" on television, one could be forgiven for believing Agatha Christie to be the high priestess of nostalgia rather than the "Queen of Crime" [...] Miss Marple seemed indeed to live in "Mayhem Parva", a village sealed in aspic, intent on keeping modernity at bay' (*FE*, 62). Similarly accused of fending off modernity, Kailyardism is an important context for the discussion of M. C. Beaton's Hamish Macbeth novels later in this chapter.

Another very different, but nevertheless important, aesthetic context for this chapter is the representation of genteel and middle-class characters in Scottish fiction. There is a critical tendency to emphasize the strong proletarian traditions and the frequent depictions of the deprived Scottish underclass in twentieth-century Scottish fiction, sometimes at the expense of overlooking the variety of innovative representations of bourgeois figures and upper-class eccentrics. It is important to note that, as with golden-age detective fiction, a focus on more affluent characters does not necessarily equate to a celebration of them. There are a number of Scottish writers of recent generations whose work has engaged inventively with middle-class or upper-class Scotland, including Muriel Spark (1918-2006), John Herdman (b. 1941), Shena Mackay (b. 1944), James Buchan (b. 1954), Iain Banks (b. 1954), Janice Galloway (b. 1955), and Ali Smith (b. 1962). Spark's 1961 novel *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* is really the definitive Scottish representation of gentility, in both senses of the word, not only meaning 'good breeding' and respectability but also being a term that gently mocks artificial politeness and refinement. *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* is, of course, the inspiration for this thesis chapter's title and

presumably also the inspiration behind the name of Atkinson's detective. Spark's novel concerns a charismatic and uninhibited Edinburgh schoolmistress, teaching at the prestigious Marcia Blaine School for Girls, and her relationship with a small select group of six pupils, known as the Brodie set. Miss Brodie neglects the school curriculum in favour of impressing the importance of cultural refinement and romance upon her pupils while also discreetly extolling the virtues and aesthetics of Fascism. In this way, she provides a key example of the kind of gothic double discussed in this thesis's second chapter. The gentility of the characters and the setting is made clear throughout by the curiously mannered style of the narration and dialogue, and the assumptions that this style seems to embody:

> 'You girls,' said Miss Brodie, 'must learn to cultivate an expression of composure. It is one of the best assets of a woman, an expression of composure, come foul, come fair. Regard the Mona Lisa over yonder! [...] She is older than the rocks on which she sits. Would that I had been given charge of you girls when you were seven. I sometimes fear it is too late, now. If you had been mine when you were seven you would have been the crème de la crème.[8]

Spark's novel does not indulge a socially naive construction of Edinburgh gentility, however, as is evident from the chapter in which Miss Brodie leads her group of privileged schoolgirls through the 'reeking network of slums which the Old Town constituted in those years. The Canongate, The Grassmarket, The Lawnmarket, were names which betokened a misty region of crime and desperation: "Lawnmarket Man Jailed"' (*PMJB*, 32).

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[8] Muriel Spark, *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* [1961] (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965), p. 22. Subsequent references to this text will use this edition with the page numbers indicated in parenthesis.

Although never recognizably crime fiction, many of Spark's novels are relevant to this chapter. *Memento Mori* (1959), for instance, exploits the pleasures of mystery in a soft-boiled setting, revolving in this case around a series of anonymous phone-calls which repeat the same unwelcome reminder to various elderly characters: 'Remember you must die'.[9] Her later novel *The Driver's Seat* (1970) is perhaps the most remarkable example of Spark's work in the context of this thesis, providing what David Lodge calls 'a crime story turned inside out'.[10] It is by no means soft-boiled, but it does involve middle-class eccentrics, such as the main character Lise who unreasonably objects to wearing stain-resistant fabric or the character Bill who fastidiously insists on following a macrobiotic diet. *The Driver's Seat* generates both suspense and poignancy with the striking use of prolepsis, something of an authorial trademark, when it reveals early on that Lise will be murdered:

> She moves and mingles as if with dreamy feet and legs, but quite plainly, from her eyes, her mind is not dreamy as she absorbs each face, each dress, each suit of clothes, all blouses, blue-jeans, each piece of hand-luggage, each voice which will accompany her on the flight now boarding at Gate 14 [...] She will be found tomorrow dead from multiple stab-wounds, her wrists bound with a silk scarf and her ankles bound with the man's necktie, in the grounds of an empty villa, in the park of the foreign city to which she is travelling on the flight now boarding at Gate 14.[11]

What is most remarkable about the novel is that Lise seems to spend much of the narrative orchestrating her own brutal murder, arranging for the scarf, the neck-tie,

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[9] Muriel Spark, *Memento Mori* [1959] (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1961), p. 10.
[10] David Lodge, as quoted in Muriel Spark, *The Driver's Seat* [1970] (London: Penguin, 2006), back-cover.
[11] Muriel Spark, *The Driver's Seat* [1970] (London: Penguin, 2006), pp. 24-25. Subsequent references to this text will use this edition with the page numbers indicated in parenthesis.

and a paper-knife to be in her possession (*TDS*, 66-67), thus raising noirish questions of free-will, determinism, and who is in 'the driver's seat'. These stylistic tropes of Spark's work are pertinent to the discussion of Atkinson's Jackson Brodie novels later in this chapter.

To return to the passages from *One Good Turn* that opened this chapter, however, Atkinson's presentation of the fictional Nina Riley series can be used to illuminate two distinct but related camps into which Scottish crime fiction of the culturally English mould can be helpfully categorized further. On the one hand, there are various examples of contemporary Scottish crime fiction that can be productively grouped alongside the type of detective fiction represented by Martin's series, though such examples are often richer in meaning and can be interpreted less dismissively than these parodies might indicate. Contemporary Scottish examples that belong to the cosier end of the soft-boiled spectrum include M. C. Beaton's Hamish Macbeth novels (1985-present); Alexander McCall Smith's Edinburgh-set *Sunday Philosophy Club* series (2004-present) about a middle-aged, middle-class female detective figure Isabel Dalhousie who has the luxury to work for a nominal fee thanks to an inheritance from her late mother; Catriona McPherson's jazz-era Dandy Gilver mysteries (2005-present); and the Mulgray Twins' idiosyncratic series of detective novels about the investigations of undercover Customs agent D. J. Smith and her trained sniffer cat Gorgonzola (2007-present).

Recent Scottish crime fiction also offers more sensitive, self-conscious, and sophisticated adaptations of the English golden-age mode. These are represented here by Atkinson's own interactions with the sub-genre, subtly emerging in the

above passages from *One Good Turn* through the sinuous prose style and the attuned awareness of the generic traditions in which the Jackson Brodie novels participate. The English golden-age label does not satisfactorily encompass all the sub-generic affiliations possible with Atkinson's series, for reasons that will be outlined more extensively later in this chapter. It is the novels' interactions with aspects of the golden-age form, however, that mark them out most conspicuously from the current hard-boiled, masculine orthodoxies of Scottish crime fiction, and which facilitate their most significant engagements with this thesis's questions of genre and nation. Other examples of recent Scottish crime fiction that can be contextualized with the more self-conscious, literary configurations of golden-age crime fiction include the work of Muriel Spark, Elspeth Barker's *O Caledonia* (1991), Iain Banks's gothic family sagas *The Crow Road* (1992) and *The Steep Approach to Garbadale* (2007), Gilbert Adair's highly self-conscious Evadne Mount mysteries (2006-2009), and Ian Rankin's collections of Rebus short stories *A Good Hanging* (1992) and *Beggars Banquet* (2002), which owe much to clue-puzzle tradition. This chapter uses two main case studies to explore the transatlantic contexts of Scottish crime fiction's participation in the golden-age and soft-boiled forms. Beaton's Hamish Macbeth series is used to represent the more whimsical, cosier end of the spectrum, and is explored in the contexts of the soft-boiled detective story and Kailyard fiction. The other case study is Kate Atkinson's Jackson Brodie series (2004-present), which provides a more self-consciously literary manifestation of golden-age tropes and sensibilities. Its mannered style, metafictional qualities, middle-class characters,

concern with form, and experimentation with chronology can be fruitfully read in the context of Scottish predecessors such as Spark and Barker.

The fictional Nina Riley series is clearly intended to be understood as an anachronistic throwback to English golden-age detective fiction, which itself is regarded as nostalgic and conservative even in its original form, never mind in retrospective homage. This characterization of the sub-genre does not entirely hold water when the primary texts are understood within their most appropriate social and aesthetic contexts. There nevertheless remains a firm association between the form and popular images of traditional, conservative English identity. K. D. M. Snell points out, moreover, that the fiction itself has played a key role in shaping such images:

> [T]he detective fiction of Agatha Christie is the most common way in which the English village has come to be known world-wide. Her fictional St Mary Mead is globally the most widely known village in writing of any form. Millions of people have learnt English by reading about this village, and their presumptions about the English have been saturated with Christie's discernment.[12]

Because the recent Scottish crime texts under consideration activate parallels, whether transparent or ironic, with a sub-genre that already has a strong, well-established national association, this link inevitably complicates their versions of Scottishness. It is initially necessary, then, to establish the exact nature of the relationship between golden-age tradition and English identity. Most accounts of the sub-genre tend towards generalization for various reasons: the golden-age tradition

[12] K. D. M. Snell, 'A drop of water from a stagnant pool? Inter-war detective fiction and the rural community' *Social History*, 35.1 (2010), 21-50 (p. 21).

takes many forms, it bleeds into other sub-genres, it is renowned for its capacity for variation, it is not confined to a single country or period, and it is popularly understood via parody.

Gill Plain, however, offers a helpful working definition of the English golden-age tradition which, although knowingly presented as an oversimplification, introduces all the form's key tropes in a refreshingly neutral way:

> The 'classical' detective is a seemingly omniscient investigator who enters an enclosed environment that has been invaded by the 'cancer' of crime. With surgical precision the detective identifies the criminal and exonerates the community from any imputation of responsibility or guilt. Order is restored and stability returns to what is depicted as an homogenous society. Irrespective of either writer or detective's actual national identity, fictions such as those of Agatha Christie, Dorothy L. Sayers, Margery Allingham and Ngaio Marsh have been regarded as archetypally British, and are generally assumed to have enjoyed a 'golden age' between 1920 and 1940.[13]

In many ways, of course, the inter-war murder mystery is the natural descendant of nineteenth-century classical detective fiction, epitomized by the work of Edgar Allan Poe and Arthur Conan Doyle. Their 'seemingly omniscient' investigators, C. Auguste Dupin and Sherlock Holmes, provide clear precursors to the kind of consulting detectives that come to dominate the golden-age tradition: preternaturally rational, patrician characters, usually with quirky foibles. Such investigators are certainly found in the work of all the authors that Plain mentions, but the model is notably absent from the American hard-boiled tradition. Golden-age detectives do not always enter an enclosed community from outside, though. They often solve

[13] Gill Plain, *Twentieth-Century Crime Fiction: Gender, Sexuality and the Body* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2001), p. 4. Subsequent references to this text will use this edition with the page numbers indicated in parenthesis.

crimes within their own community, such as Miss Marple's many investigations in her own village of St. Mary Mead. The enclosed communities of golden-age detective fiction tend to be small, organic rural villages or old country houses, but the sub-genre's need for 'difference *in* repetition' has led golden-age writers to engineer a range of situations which provide the same enclosed conditions, a range best illustrated by Snell's list of Agatha Christie's closed social milieux: 'a long-distance train journey, a group of aeroplane passengers, the sociability of a bridge party, a Nile cruiser, a trans-Atlantic liner, an island off Devon or a home for young offenders'.[14] Such settings, as well as the more typical ones mentioned above, contrast with the customarily urban settings of hard-boiled fiction in the sense that they all create conditions where there is not necessarily much diversity or social breadth among the inhabitants, though there is room for upper-class eccentricity. That the community is cut off from the rest of the world in some way is also important for the golden-age murder mystery because it intensifies the puzzle-like conditions of the text by limiting the number of potential suspects and by restricting the movement of the characters, often preventing suspects from leaving the locus or delaying the arrival of more official investigators. Such artificial situations are lovingly parodied in Lawrence Block's American homage to the golden age *The Burglar in the Library* (1997). John Scaggs describes the sub-genre's enclosed communities as 'the social equivalent of the hermetically sealed environment of the locked-room mystery', a form which, he argues, was 'immensely reassuring for the

[14] Snell, 'A drop of water from a stagnant pool?', pp. 24-25. The earlier quotation from this sentence is from Stephen Neale, *Genre* (London: British Film Institute, 1980), p. 50. It is discussed in depth in this thesis's third chapter.

inter-war reading public, reducing the world, as it did, to self-contained, enclosed, manageable proportions and dimensions'.[15]

Plain's image of the otherwise healthy, wholesome community being invaded by the 'cancer' of crime, which the detective then must 'surgically' eradicate, is an apt way of drawing attention to the golden age's implicit ideological attitudes towards crime and punishment. A similar image of contamination followed by purification is explicitly employed in Christie's first Miss Marple novel *The Murder at the Vicarage* (1930), when the murderer walks past Miss Marple without seeing her because, as she says, 'I was bending right over – trying to get up one of those nasty dandelions'.[16] Miss Marple goes on, of course, metaphorically to 'weed' the garden that is St. Mary Mead by correctly identifying and entrapping the murderer, an act of detection which, it must be remembered, would likely lead to the death penalty for the culprit at this time.[17] The act of absolving the rest of the community from guilt or responsibility is one that has received much critical attention. As W. H. Auden hyperbolically puts it, 'The fantasy, then, which the detective story addict indulges is the fantasy of being restored to the Garden of Eden, to a state of innocence, where he may know love as love and not as the law'.[18] Auden sees the act of murder in golden-age detective fiction as a disruption within an otherwise perfect pastoral community, and the solving of the crime at the end pardons the other characters, whose guilt had hitherto been in question, and

[15] John Scaggs, *Crime Fiction* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 52.
[16] Agatha Christie, *The Murder at the Vicarage* [1930] (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1948), p. 73. Subsequent references to this text will use this edition with the page numbers indicated in parenthesis.
[17] See Snell, 'A drop of water from a stagnant pool?', p. 46, n. 198. Snell points out 'the connotations of "weeding" as part of an ordered "garden culture" of modernity – eliminating the undesirable – as argued by Z. Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (1989)'.
[18] W. H. Auden, 'The Guilty Vicarage', in W. H. Auden, *The Dyer's Hand and Other Essays* (London: Faber, 1963), pp. 146-158 (p. 158).

reinstates the village as a homely, quintessentially English, rural paradise. Of course, the ideological assumption that police-work and detective fiction is simply about eliminating a deviant criminal other from an otherwise wholesome community is fiercely contested in later developments in the genre, best represented in Scottish crime fiction by William McIlvanney's Laidlaw novels.

Plain's final point, that golden-age detective fiction is regarded as 'archetypally British' in spite of the varied nationalities of its writers and detectives, is an important one for this chapter. It is a little puzzling that she uses the term 'British' here, instead of the more customary national attribution of the mode as 'English'. Perhaps 'British' is chosen in order to accommodate the rare non-English examples of the sub-genre such as Dorothy L. Sayers's *Five Red Herrings* (1931), and Josephine Tey's *The Man in the Queue* (1929) and *The Singing Sands* (1952). Plain's choice also underscores the transatlantic binary opposition between the American hard-boiled mode and the British golden-age tradition, which she then goes on to challenge. This chapter likewise ultimately argues that the latter distinction is not as clear-cut as the critical consensus suggests and that the golden-age form is neither necessarily as cosy nor as distinctively English as it is conventionally assumed. There are various social and cultural reasons, however, why golden-age detective fiction is so resonant with constructions of English identity during the interwar period. The sub-genre's rural emphasis and nostalgic values are certainly consistent with England's self-image at this time, as it is defined by historian Alun Howkins:

> Since 1861 England has been an urban and industrial nation. The experience of the majority of the population is, and was, that of urban life, the boundaries of their physical world defined by streets and houses rather than fields or lanes. Yet the ideology of England and Englishness is to a remarkable degree rural. Most importantly, a large part of the English *ideal* is rural.[19]

Howkins's article concerns the period from the 1880s to the end of the 1930s, which he characterizes as one of rural myth-making for England, culturally-speaking. This pastoral projection of authentic Englishness has its literary precedents in much English Romantic poetry, perhaps best illustrated by the opposition between the 'dark satanic mills' of the industrial revolution and 'England's green & pleasant Land' in William Blake's 'Jerusalem' (1804).[20]

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, there is an even greater tension between such national self-fashioning and England's concurrent status as an urban, industrial, modernizing nation, in which the countryside was of dwindling material relevance. Concentrating on the same period as Howkins, Martin J. Wiener similarly argues that the cultural nostalgia for a rural way of life that arose at this time in England was a hostile reaction to rapid industrialization. As Wiener points out, this tension was particularly resonant in England, unlike France and America where urban and rural values were more likely to be seen as complementary. He further suggests a whole range of supposedly English traditionalist values and assumptions with which the rural myth-making corresponds:

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[19] Alun Howkins, 'The Discovery of Rural England', in *Englishness: Politics and Culture 1880-1920*, ed. by Robert Colls and Philip Dodd (London: Croom Held Ltd., 1986), pp. 62-88 (p. 62).
[20] William Blake, *The Poetry of William Blake*, ed. by P. K. Roy (Jaipur: ABD Publishers, 2010), p. 122.

> An 'English way of life' was defined and widely accepted; it stressed nonindustrial noninnovative and nonmaterial qualities, best encapsulated in rustic imagery – 'England is the country,' in Stanley Baldwin's phrase (by his time already a cliché). This countryside of the mind was everything industrial society was not – ancient, slow-moving, stable, cozy, and 'spiritual'. The English genius, it declared, was (despite appearances) not economic or technical, but social and spiritual; it did not lie in inventing, producing, or selling, but in preserving, harmonizing, and moralizing. The English character was not naturally progressive, but conservative; its greatest task – and achievement – lay in taming and 'civilizing' the dangerous engines of progress it had unwittingly unleashed.[21]

The anti-modern traits that Wiener ascribes to the 'English way of life' are all particularly pertinent to the inter-war murder mystery. As discussed above, it is important for the functioning of the sub-genre that the narrative centres on a small organic community of the kind conjured up by the rural myths outlined by Wiener. Furthermore, golden-age detective stories often advertise their own slow-moving cosiness. In Christie's 'The Tuesday Night Club' (1932), for instance, the unassuming Miss Marple provides the correct solution to a particularly convoluted mystery that has outfoxed all the other urbane intellectual guests, but only after saying 'Dear, dear […] I have dropped another stitch. I have been so interested in the story'.[22] The world of golden-age detective fiction in general corresponds closely with the qualities Wiener attributes to the 'countryside of the mind': 'ancient, slow-moving, stable, cozy, and "spiritual"'. Indeed, Carl D. Malmgren identifies soft-boiled crime fiction as taking place in a fundamentally centred world that has much in common with the 'English *ideal*' that Wiener and Howkins describe: 'at once

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[21] Martin J. Wiener, *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit 1850-1980* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 6.

[22] Agatha Christie, *The Thirteen Problems* [1932] (London: Collins, 1932), p. 21. Subsequent references to this text will use this edition with the page numbers indicated in parenthesis.

orderly, stable, resistant to change, and relatively free of contingency'.[23] Such images of conservative Englishness remain a prominent presence throughout the twentieth century. They are readily observable, for instance, in The Kinks' song 'The Village Green Preservation Society' (1966), which semi-ironically celebrates such emblems of traditional Englishness as village greens, strawberry jam, draught beer, Mrs Mopp, Old Mother Riley, custard pies, the George Cross, the 'Sherlock-Holmes-English-speaking vernacular', little shops, china cups, Tudor houses, and virginity, while condemning aspects of modernity such as office blocks and skyscrapers.[24] Such pastoral images of Englishness may also influence political policy. Addressing the Conservative Group for Europe in 1993, the then Prime Minister John Major, despite spending his formative years in the urban, impoverished, and multicultural district of Brixton, commented:

> Fifty years on from now, Britain will still be the country of long shadows on cricket grounds, warm beer, invincible green suburbs, dog lovers and pool fillers and, as George Orwell said, 'Old maids bicycling to holy communion through the morning mist', and, if we get our way, 'Shakespeare will still be read even in school'.[25]

Major's images, which appropriate Orwell's ironic words at face value, contribute to what might be termed 'the English Dream' and serve to demonstrate why the soft-boiled murder mystery is conventionally considered a culturally English form. There are, of course, aspects of golden-age detective fiction that are less cosy,

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[23] Carl D. Malmgren, *Anatomy of Murder: Mystery, Detection and Crime Fiction* (Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 2001), p. 14.
[24] Ray Davies, 'The Village Green Preservation Society' [1966], in The Kinks, *The Kinks are the Village Green Preservation Society* (London: Pye, 1968).
[25] John Major, as quoted in Peter Kellner, 'What Britishness means to the British', in *Britishness: Perspectives on the Britishness Question*, ed. by Andrew Gamble and Tony Wright (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2009), pp. 62-71 (p. 63).

conservative, and backwards-looking than this discussion suggests, and these will be explored more extensively later in this chapter.

As well as the sub-genre's nostalgic and rural emphasis tying in with England's self-image at this time, there are a few quintessentially English aesthetic traditions before and after the inter-war period within which golden-age detective fiction can be helpfully contextualized. The comedy of manners, for example, with its roots in Restoration drama, enjoyed a renaissance in England in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, observable in the work of Oscar Wilde, Noël Coward, and P. G. Wodehouse. Wilde's society plays of the 1890s are especially relevant, echoing the Restoration comedy of manners but doing so in a way that is still resonant with conceptions of Englishness. As Terrence McNally points out, 'It is ironic that Wilde, an Irishman, is generally thought of as some sort of *über* Englishman'.[26] Like the inter-war murder mystery, the turn-of-the-century comedy of manners focuses on a superficial society of eccentric bourgeois and upper-class characters, has an essentially comic tone, indulges camp sensibilities, uses elaborate artificial plotting, stock character types, reversals of expectation, irony-rich dialogue, highly improbable narrative resolutions, and tropes such as disguise, deception, and mistaken identity. The celebrated interview scene from Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895) illustrates the kind of ironic dialogue that is characteristic of the comedy of manners:

> Lady Bracknell: I am quite ready to enter your name, should your answers be what a really affectionate mother requires. Do you smoke?

[26] Terrence McNally, 'Introduction', in Oscar Wilde, *The Importance of Being Earnest and Other Plays* (New York: Random House, 2003), pp. xi-xvi (p. xiii).

> Jack: Well, yes, I must admit I smoke.
> Lady Bracknell: I am glad to hear it. A man should always have an occupation of some kind. There are far too many idle men in London as it is.[27]

The audience and Jack expect that smoking will be considered an undesirable habit for a potential son-in-law. Lady Bracknell's response reverses this expectation, generating irony and social satire by revealing that she, while railing against idleness and extolling the virtues of hard work, is so idle and removed from the world of employment that she considers smoking a worthy occupation. In Christie's 'The Herb of Death' (1932), a character called Mrs Bantry similarly reveals her own social naivety to comic effect when she complains, 'You don't know how banal my life is. What with the servants and the difficulties of getting scullery maids, and just going to town for clothes, and dentists, and Ascot (which Arthur hates) and then the garden…' (*TTP*, 188-189). Given the context of The Great Slump of the 1930s, this dialogue constitutes a subtly satiric depiction of a frivolous, comically self-absorbed character. The comedy of manners is a productive point of comparison with golden-age detective fiction since the former, unlike the latter, is widely considered a sophisticated and subversive form. As McNally remarks of *The Importance of Being Earnest*, 'It is a play that calls society's bluff by naming each and every one of us a hypocrite. If it weren't so funny, we would shun its bleak view of human society'.[28] Such characteristics are summarized effectively by Chris Baldick's description of the comedy of manners:

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[27] Oscar Wilde, '*The Importance of Being Earnest*', in Oscar Wilde, *The Importance of Being Earnest and Other Plays* (New York: Random House, 2003), pp. 175-246 (pp. 196-197).
[28] McNally, 'Introduction', p. xi.

> A kind of comedy representing the complex and sophisticated code of behaviour current in fashionable circles of society, where appearances count for more than true moral character. Its plot usually revolves around intrigues of lust and greed, the self-interested cynicism of the characters being masked by decorous pretence.[29]

It is these kind of traits, such as the impish satirical elements, the self-conscious depiction of shallow characters with shallow values but elaborate codes of gentility and politeness, and the deceptively cynical understanding of human motivation, that the defenders of golden-age detective fiction foreground in order to show that it is more sophisticated and transgressive than has been conventionally assumed. This kind of reading of the sub-genre will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

Another distinctively English aesthetic context that is relevant to golden-age detective fiction is the Ealing Studios films of the 1940s and 1950s. Although they were made after the heyday of the interwar murder mystery, these films further corroborate the link between Englishness and the kind of character types, values, and assumptions found in golden-age detective fiction. As Stephanie Muir puts it, the films made at Ealing Studios at this time express a 'kind of middlebrow low-key Britishness as a little island holding out against the vast surrounding ocean of American culture'.[30] Ealing films such as *Whisky Galore!* (Alexander Mackendrick, 1949), and *Passport to Pimlico* (Henry Cornelius, 1949) celebrate community values and quaint British eccentricity, but they also cock a snook at authority figures in their own way. *Whisky Galore!* is an especially interesting example in the context of this chapter. The film sets an organic society of canny Scottish locals, with their

[29] Chris Baldick, *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 63.
[30] Stephanie Muir, *Studying Ealing Studios* (Leighton Buzzard: Auteur, 2010), p. 13.

shared community values and eccentricities, against a group of pompous English officials working on the island as part of the Home Guard. As Michael Balcon, the head of production at Ealing Studios, put it, 'The country was tired of regulations and regimentation and there was a mild anarchy in the air. In a sense our comedies were a reflection of this mood […] a safety valve for our more anti-social impulses'.[31] This idea is of course particularly pertinent to golden-age murder narratives, which often indulge dark vicarious thrills but do so in the safe context of a cosy familiar form. There are various non-Ealing films from roughly the same time that introduce unexpectedly dark or politicized aspects into the context of English cosiness, such as *Cottage to Let* (Anthony Asquith, 1941), *Green for Danger* (Sidney Gilliat, 1946), *Monsieur Verdoux* (Charlie Chaplin, 1947), *Father Brown* (Robert Hamer, 1954), and Guy Hamilton's 1954 film adaptation of J. B. Priestley's play *An Inspector Calls* (1945). To return to the Ealing comedies, however, several iconic examples such as *Kind Hearts and Coronets* (Robert Hamer, 1949), *The Lavender Hill Mob* (Charles Crichton, 1951), and *The Ladykillers* (Mackendrick, 1955), are crime comedies with a peculiarly English slant, demonstrating much in common with both the comedy of manners and golden-age detective fiction. *Kind Hearts and Coronets*, for instance, concerns a witty and charming serial killer called Louis Mazzini who murders the members of the aristocratic D'Ascoyne family, all played by Alec Guinness, who stand in the way of him inheriting the title of the Duke of Chalfont. The narrative addresses English concerns about class, breeding, and social mobility, and the film's dialogue exhibits Wildean wit throughout. In one

[31] Michael Balcon, *Michael Balcon Presents: A Lifetime of Films* (London: Hutchinson, 1969), p. 159.

scene, for example, in which Louis goes on to murder the suggestively named current Duke of Chalfont, Ethelred D'Ascoyne, by shooting him in the face, he comments, 'The next morning I went out shooting with Ethelred, or rather to watch Ethelred shooting, for my principles will not allow me to take a direct part in blood sports'.[32] Like the *fin-de-siècle* comedy of manners, the films made by Ealing Studios in the 1940s and the 1950s not only provide a context in which to situate golden-age detective fiction as a culturally English form, but they also suggest critical avenues for more positive and sensitive ways of reading soft-boiled murder mysteries than those which they have conventionally been afforded.

The fictional Nina Riley series, for instance, provides Atkinson with a springboard for scathing commentary on detective fiction, especially that of the golden-age mould. It seems to function as a kind of straw man against which to judge her own brand of more self-consciously literary crime fiction. Part of the criticism conveyed in the passages that open this chapter seems to be aimed at soft-boiled detective fiction's apparent social indifference. However, as Lee Horsley observes, classic detective fiction cannot actually avoid expressing some kind of ideological position, and this position is rarely entirely 'innocuous' or 'inoffensive':

> Reluctance to comment on contemporary affairs is in itself, of course, an ideologically loaded decision, and it is important to emphasize that classic detective fiction, in spite of its apparent insularity, does nevertheless *implicitly* have a great deal to say about social power and contemporary concerns.[33]

[32] *Kind Hearts and Coronets*, dir. by Robert Hamer (Ealing, 1949).
[33] Lee Horsley, *Twentieth-Century Crime Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 18. Subsequent references to this text will use this edition with the page numbers indicated in parenthesis.

Horsley's interpretative strategy for unearthing golden-age politics, by laying the emphasis on the aspects of reality that the text suppresses, avoids, or is ticklish about, exhibits certain echoes of Pierre Macherey's model of Marxist literary theory, as set out in *A Theory of Literary Production* (1966).

Instead of seeing a literary text as a complete, coherent entity and sensitively examining aspects contained within it, in the way that traditional formalist literary criticism does, Macherey proposes that this sense of coherence and closure is illusory and that a literary text is necessarily incomplete in terms of its relation to the society in which it is produced. It is therefore the gaps and silences in the text that act as the most decisive symptoms of its ideological position:

> The literary work is also doubly articulated: at the initial level of sequences (the fable) and themes (the forms) which establish an illusory order; this is the level of organicist aesthetic theories. At another level, the work is articulated in relation to the reality from the ground of which it emerges [...] We should question the work as to what it does not and cannot say [...] The order which it professes is merely an imagined order, projected on to disorder, the fictive resolution of ideological conflicts, a resolution so precarious that it is obvious in the very letter of the text where incoherence and incompleteness burst forth.[34]

Macherey's argument is intended to be applicable to all literary works, even ones which seem to reflect a particular reality in an honest, comprehensive way. With a sub-genre like golden-age detective fiction, however, in which artificiality holds sway and the suppression of violence, sex, and social commentary is particularly conspicuous given the sensational potential of the subject matter, his argument is especially resonant. Macherey's remarks about a literary work's 'illusory order' or

[34] Pierre Macherey, *A Theory of Literary Production*, trans. by Geoffrey Wall (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), p. 155.

'fictive resolution' are also, of course, particularly relevant to the golden-age murder mystery. As John G. Cawelti points out, in the classic detective story, 'the detective's explanation is precisely a denial of mystery and a revelation that human motivation and action can be exactly specified and understood'.[35] The archetypal grand denouement at the end of the golden-age detective story, whereby the evil murderer's intricate crimes are unravelled, all the plot threads are seamlessly explained, and the innocence of all the other characters is confirmed, is a good example of the kind of 'imagined order, projected on to disorder' that Macherey describes. As argued below, however, the golden-age murder mystery is surprisingly self-conscious about its artificiality, and its aesthetically pleasing sense of narrative closure is often so implausibly orderly that such a 'fictive resolution' can obliquely reveal much about aspects of disorder or anxiety in the society from which the text emerges.

To offer a relevant example of how the omitted or concealed aspects of a text can still contribute to the social meanings that underpin it, the darker ideological implications of golden-age nostalgia were clearly exposed in 2011. Brian True-May, the co-creator and producer of ITV's long-running, deeply insipid soft-boiled detective series *Midsomer Murders* (1997-present), was suspended from the show after expressing his, and by extension the programme's, exclusionary views about the English national character in an interview with *The Radio Times*: 'We just don't have ethnic minorities involved. Because it wouldn't be the English village with

[35] John G. Cawelti, *Adventure, Mystery and Romance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), p. 90.

them [...] We're the last bastion of Englishness and I want to keep it that way'.[36] The insinuation here is that racial diversity among Midsomer's inhabitants would impinge upon the text's golden-age purity, introducing an aspect of modernity or realism that would be at odds with the sub-genre's typical presentation of an anachronistic, quaint, cosy, English village. Although it would be difficult to discern an explicit xenophobic agenda in *Midsomer Murders*, based solely on the content of the series, the retrogressive decision to feature only Caucasian characters can certainly be read as an ideologically revealing gap between fiction and reality. The extra-textual evidence, in the shape of True-May's remarks, confirms Horsley's argument, foregrounding the relation between the golden age's generic intransigence and its often reactionary politics, as well as suggesting just how ideologically loaded soft-boiled detective fiction's insularity can be.

There is certainly a strong sense in the passages from *One Good Turn* that the key features of the fictional Nina Riley novels, such as their use of an imaginary pastoral Scotland, their setting in the immediate past, their prudish avoidance of sex, their sanitized depictions of corpses, their unrealistically methodical murders, and their lack of commentary about economic inequality, are socially and politically significant, in terms of the content they choose to overlook. The references to 'retro-utopian Britain', aristocrats, gamekeepers, acquiescent serfs, and even, in a figurative way, the fact that Nina 'inherited' her detective agency from her uncle also constitute barbs aimed at the golden age's perceived backwards-looking celebration of the hierarchical British class system and the sub-genre's much-

[36] John Plunkett, 'Midsomer Murders producer suspended over diversity remarks', *Guardian*, 15 March 2011 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2011/mar/15/midsomer-murders-producer-race-row> [accessed 22 September 2012].

maligned socially-blinkered focus on petty quarrels within the landed gentry. All of these features, often cited not only as evidence of the form's conservative politics but also of its unsophisticated aesthetics, are firmly associated with the golden age. These associations arise, however, largely because of the entrenched critical tendency for polemic readings of the sub-genre.

This kind of disdainful dismissal of soft-boiled detective fiction, implicit in the passages from *One Good Turn*, originates in Raymond Chandler's essay 'The Simple Art of Murder' (1944), in which he presents the archetypal parody of the golden-age formula, intended to emphasize its tameness, its artificiality, its far-fetched plot contrivances, and its upper-class naivety about crime and wider social problems:

> But fundamentally it is the same careful grouping of suspects, the same utterly incomprehensible trick of how somebody stabbed Mrs. Pottington Postlethwaite III with the solid platinum poniard just as she flatted on the top note of the 'Bell Song' from *Lakmé* in the presence of fifteen ill-assorted guests; the same ingénue in fur-trimmed pajamas screaming in the night to make the company pop in and out of doors and ball up the timetable; the same moody silence next day as they sit around sipping Singapore slings and sneering at each other, while the flatfeet crawl to and fro under the Persian rugs, with their derby hats on [...] There is a very simple statement to be made about all these stories: they do not really come off intellectually as problems, and they do not come off artistically as fiction. They are too contrived, and too little aware of what goes on in the world.[37]

Here, Chandler privileges and wittily amplifies certain golden-age tropes in order to suggest that the sub-genre is both tediously formulaic and disengaged from the social causes of crime. He lampoons the golden age's tendency for long-winded,

[37] Raymond Chandler, 'The Simple Art of Murder' [1944], in Raymond Chandler, *The Simple Art of Murder* (New York: Vintage Books, 1988), pp. 1-18 (pp. 10-11). Subsequent references to this text will use this edition with the page numbers indicated in parenthesis.

elaborate methods of murder, its convention of using a closed community of eccentric upper-class suspects, its use of shallow puzzle elements such as timetables, its reductive characterization, and its penchant for faux-exoticism, all of which, Chandler implies, function ideologically to distance the reader from the brutal realities of crime and violence that the genre ought to explore unflinchingly. It is important to note, however, that Chandler is discussing the English golden age with an explicit agenda to elevate his own chosen sub-genre: the American hard-boiled tradition. Indeed, the latter half of the same essay provides a pioneering appraisal of the work of his main generic forerunner Dashiell Hammett, in which Chandler foregrounds the intricacies of style and artistry in a mode that takes pains to present its artifice as natural, objective, and unpretentious: 'He had style, but his audience didn't know it, because it was in a language not supposed to be capable of such refinements' (*SAOM*, 15). Despite having spent his formative years in Victorian England and having been educated at the prestigious establishment of Dulwich College, Chandler seems to identify himself as American and, in turn, to equate American identity with traditional, rugged masculinity: 'The English police endure [the interfering amateur detective] with their customary stoicism, but I shudder to think what the boys down at the Homicide Bureau in my city would do to him' (*SAOM*, 8). Indeed, the details of faux-exoticism which Chandler uses to burlesque the golden age, such as the solid platinum poniard, the fur-trimmed pajamas, the Singapore slings, and the Persian rugs, are similar to those invoked in the homophobic content of his novel *The Big Sleep*, which Chandler uses to characterize the homosexual pornographer Arthur Geiger as effete and un-American, an example

discussed in this thesis's first chapter. This connection is revealing because problematic issues of gender and sexuality are frequently brought into play in negative descriptions of golden-age detective fiction, especially in unfavourable comparisons with the aggressively masculine and heterosexual hard-boiled mode. Indeed, the golden age is typically gendered camp, sexless, or feminine. In the same essay, for instance, Chandler refers to 'the flustered old ladies – of both sexes (or no sex) and almost all ages – who like their murders scented with magnolia blossoms and do not care to be reminded that murder is an act of infinite cruelty' (*SAOM*, 16).

It is the final sentence in Chander's parody of the sub-genre, however, which provides the key to the subsequent history of criticism aimed at English golden-age detective fiction: that it is 'too contrived, and too little aware of what goes on in the world'. It is these two points that underlie nearly every negative appraisal of English golden-age detective fiction. Ken Worpole, for instance, dismisses the form as 'fictional reassurance for the bourgeoisie'.[38] This reading of the sub-genre is common, but it fails to clarify what the bourgeoisie need reassurance about and how these texts would provide it. Indeed, Alison Light's more positive account of the English golden-age tradition, discussed below, interprets the mode's apparent reassurances in a more radical way. It is this popular perception of soft-boiled detective fiction that *One Good Turn* foregrounds when it amusingly notes that in one of the Nina Riley novels, she 'prevented the kidnapping of the infant Prince Charles from Balmoral' (*OGT*, 27). Stephen Knight's discussion of the golden age also emphasizes its social naivety and aesthetic flatness:

[38] Ken Worpole, *Dockers and Detectives* (London: Verso, 1983), p. 33.

> [T]he world of a Christie novel is a dream of bourgeois living without the heights, depths or conflicts of real social activity. It is a projection of the dreams of those anxious middle-class people who would like a life where change, disorder and work are equally absent.[39]

Ian Rankin similarly complains about the English tradition's exclusively 'upper-middle-class detectives investigating upper-middle-class crimes'.[40] What all these complaints have in common is that they dismiss the golden-age murder mystery on the basis that, in striving to entertain its readers and keep them happy, it is too artificial and it fails to engage with real social problems. It is worth noting, too, that they are retrospective readings of the sub-genre which, either explicitly or implicitly, seem to interpret it unfavourably in comparison to the more self-consciously radical forms of crime fiction that follow.

However, according to some critics, these common evaluations constitute mis-readings of golden-age detective fiction, in the sense that they impose alien literary values and expectations upon the mode, and fail to take into account its historical and aesthetic contexts. Bertolt Brecht, for instance, confronts the hoary issue of formulism in classic detective fiction:

> Whoever exclaims, 'Always the same!' when he notes that a tenth of all murders take place in a vicarage has not understood the crime novel. He could just as well exclaim 'Always the same!' in the theatre the moment the curtain goes up. The originality lies in other things. Indeed, the fact that one feature of the crime novel is the variation of more or less fixed elements even grants the whole genre its aesthetic benchmark.[41]

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[39] Stephen Knight, *Form and Ideology in Crime Fiction* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980), pp. 117-118.
[40] Wanner, *Dead Sharp*, p. 18.
[41] Bertolt Brecht, 'On the Popularity of the Crime Novel' [1967], trans. by Martin Harvey and Aaron Kelly, in *The Irish Review*, 31 (2004), 90-95 (pp. 90-91). Subsequent references to this text will use this edition with the page numbers indicated in parenthesis.

It is clear from Brecht's choice of locus which sub-genre he has in mind here, invoking both the first Miss Marple novel *The Murder at the Vicarage* (Agatha Christie, 1929) and Auden's semi-patronizing, confessional essay about his addiction to detective stories, 'The Guilty Vicarage' (1948). The crime genre's economy of variation, to which Brecht alludes, is especially pronounced in the golden-age style for several reasons. It operates within stricter, more explicitly acknowledged parameters than any other sub-genre, as is evident from the more or less successful attempts to prescribe and codify its conventions during its prime, such as Ronald Knox's 'Ten Commandments of Detection' (1928) and S. S. Van Dine's 'Twenty Rules for Writing Detective Stories' (1928). Texts belonging to the golden age and its predecessor, analytical detective fiction, also demonstrate a surprising degree of self-awareness with regard to their status as detective stories, illustrating the sub-genre's fundamental concern with form and indicating that golden-age texts are intensely aware of their conventions and deploy them in conscious, readily discernible ways that do not put off their supposedly naive readers. In Arthur Conan Doyle's *A Study in Scarlet* (1887), for example, Dr Watson tells Sherlock Holmes 'You remind me of Edgar Allan Poe's Dupin. I had no idea that such individuals did exist outside of stories'.[42] In the first chapter of *The Murder at the Vicarage*, the narrator similarly tells his wife Griselda that she reads too many detective stories, after she affectionately mimics the hackneyed prose style of the baser kinds of sensation fiction (*MATV*, 11). These examples are by no means exceptional within the golden age. Indeed, referring to an example from John

[42] Arthur Conan Doyle, *A Study in Scarlet* [1887] (London: Penguin Books, 1981), p. 25.

Dickson Carr's *The Hollow Man* (1935), in which the detective figure at one point tells another character that they are in a detective story, Lee Horsley points out that 'This sort of deconstructive play is very much a part of the highly contrived and self-referential world of "classic detective fiction"' (*TCCF*, 12).

In line with Horsley and Brecht's arguments, soft-boiled detective fiction's use of well-established conventions does not necessarily render it beneath critical attention. Many golden-age crime novels actually benefit from a familiarity with the mode's formulae and conventions. *The Murder at the Vicarage*, for instance, assumes that the reader is familiar with the conventions of the murder mystery when it directly alludes to the 'least likely suspect' cliché during Miss Marple's summing up of the case: 'I know that in books it is always the most unlikely person. But I never find that rule applies in real life' (*MATV*, 240). This line subtly reveals a complex process at work in much golden-age detective fiction. The fact that the novel is able to defamiliarize the generic convention that the 'least likely suspect' is actually the prime suspect suggests a level of sophistication not usually ascribed to the readers of the form. As well as demonstrating how golden-age detective fiction is enriched by an awareness of its rules and conventions, this line playfully ironizes the artificiality of the novel's fictive world by characterizing it as 'real life' in contrast to the contrived world of detective fiction. Christie's earlier Hercule Poirot novel *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* (1926) offers another, more structural example of how golden-age detective fiction takes advantage of its tight conventions. It deliberately exploits readers' expectations of the classic detective story to create a genuinely surprising denouement when it is revealed that the murderer is a character

called Dr Shepherd, who acts as the novel's narrator and 'Watson' figure.[43] Such figures, who assist the detective and narrate the plot, typically provide a trustworthy account of the investigation without concealing any information from the reader. It is a literary device used to distance the reader from the direct thought-processes of the preternaturally gifted detective and to provide a surrogate for the inquisitive reader within the story. In *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*, the remarkable effect of introducing the modernist technique of unreliable narration into the equation is made all the more powerful by the long history of this generic convention. In any case, successful golden-age writers like Agatha Christie, Dorothy L. Sayers, John Dickson Carr, and Margery Allingham would not have been able to sustain their long lucrative careers without their readers becoming extremely familiar with the conventions. Christie's work in particular is remarkable for the way that it creates seemingly endless permutations of the detective story without ever radically transgressing the conventions of the form or alienating her readers. Rather than being naively formulaic and contrived, then, the classic detective story, at its best, self-consciously embraces its qualities of formalism and artificiality. While this kind of sophistication might not seem the principal appeal of golden-age murder mysteries for many readers, these characteristics nevertheless produce noteworthy aesthetic effects and play an important role in packaging the sub-genre's implicit social content. In any case, such reading activity is a far more knowing and ironic process than the detractors of the golden age are willing to acknowledge, as the above examples illustrate.

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[43] Agatha Christie, *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* [1926] (New York: Simon and Schuster Inc., 1986). Subsequent references to this text will use this edition with the page numbers indicated in parenthesis.

Using the work of Agatha Christie as her case study, Alison Light mounts an academically ingenious defence of the sub-genre on these grounds in an extensive chapter of her monograph *Forever England: Femininity, literature and conservatism between the wars* (1991). Contrary to the popular retrospective views of Christie as a 'producer of harmless drivel' or a 'high priestess of nostalgia' writing about 'a village sealed in aspic, intent on keeping modernity at bay', Light argues that she is a 'popular modernist', supporting this counterintuitive characterization with a rigorous examination of her work (*FE*, 62-64). Light is not the only critic to contextualize golden-age detective fiction in this way. Stephen Knight sums up a range of critical positions that revolve around the correspondence between the sub-genre and modernism:

> The date of the clue-puzzle must raise the question to what extent it is a version of modernism. Some have thought it was in fact a refuge from modernism: [Jacques] Barzun because of its narrative integrity, and Marjorie Nicolson, an American professor of English writing in 1929, because it established 'a re-belief in a universe governed by cause and effect' [...] But it could be argued that the plain flat style, so clear in Christie but common elsewhere, the formal concerns which Barzun applauds, the anonymity of the authorial voice which is so common, and especially the way in which the texts continuously expose identity to be a constructed illusion, are all aspects of modernism. Alison Light sees 'golden age' crime fiction as offering a 'conservative modernism' in much this way, while [Martin] Priestman sees aspects of 'pre-post-modernism' in the form.[44]

[44] Stephen Knight, 'The golden age', in *The Cambridge Companion to Crime Fiction*, ed. by Martin Priestman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 77-94 (p. 90). See also Jacques Barzun, 'Detection and the Literary Art' [1961], in *Detective Fiction: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1980), pp. 144-153. Marjorie Nicolson, 'The Professor and the Detective' [1929], in *The Art of the Mystery Story*, ed. by Howard Haycraft (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1946), pp. 110-127 (p. 112). Light, *Forever England*, pp. 65-75. Martin Priestman, *Detective Fiction and Literature: The Figure on the Carpet* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1980), p. 152.

Even the critical position that golden-age detective fiction is a refuge from or rejection of modernist discourse indicates some form of correlation between the two. Light's terms 'popular modernist' and 'conservative modernity', of course, are somewhat oxymoronic, but only when the traditional conception of modernism is enforced. In his study of what he calls 'pulp modernism', however, David M. Earle suggests that it is not sustainable to retain the traditional image of modernism as 'a singular coterie avant-garde movement based on stylistic experimentation and difficulty, and defined by its "great divide" from popular culture'.[45] Indeed, Jeff Wallace's recent introduction to the subject *Beginning Modernism* (2011) unabashedly lists Charlie Chaplin's movies and the Model T Ford as archetypal examples of modernism without any kind of haughty qualifying adjective such as 'popular' or 'vernacular'.[46] That the term 'high modernism', rather than just 'modernism', is now frequently used to delineate the work of avant-garde writers such as James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, and T. S. Eliot further indicates a shift in the understanding of modernism and the texts that the categorization can meaningfully accommodate. Demonstrating the critical value of keeping the limits of modernism negotiable, the important works of female writers like Woolf, Katherine Mansfield, and Gertrude Stein, which are now considered central modernist texts, were not always accepted into the once monolithic modernist canon.[47] Light's reading of Christie as a 'popular modernist' is not as wayward as it may initially appear. Its contrariness and oxymoronic appearance, in any case, helpfully encourage a more

[45] David M. Earle, *Re-Covering Modernism: Pulps, Paperbacks, and the Prejudice of Form* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing, 2009), p. 4.
[46] Jeff Wallace, *Beginning Modernism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), p. 2.
[47] See Earle, *Re-Covering Modernism*, p. 4.

sensitive, less dismissive understanding of golden-age detective fiction than that which it has previously been afforded.

While this study does not ultimately agree with Light that Christie is a modernist writer, the largely neglected aspects of Christie's work that she emphasizes do provide illuminating interpretative strategies for the primary material under discussion here. Light's argument begins by deliberately separating Christie's work from its familiar generic context, presumably in order to undermine the reductive prejudices exemplified by Chandler:

> Christie, like [Ivy] Compton-Burnett, offers a modern sense of the unstable limits of respectability; like her she portrays a society of strangers whose social exchanges have become theatrical and dissevered from a sense of place. Both share a modernist irony, a strict formalism of technique, and employ a language of reticence which was able to articulate a conservative Englishness but in a modern form. (*FE*, 61-64)

Drawing on its similarities with the novels of a more critically respected modernist writer who does not write detective fiction, Light's reading of Christie's work attempts to overturn the popular perceptions of the sub-genre. Throughout her chapter on Christie, Light draws attention to the more transgressive, disquieting, and sophisticated nuances that the conservative golden-age detective story often houses within its apparently cosy, familiar structures. The argument is applicable not only to Christie's work, but to a whole range of golden-age texts. Even the quintessentially English rural myth-making which the interwar murder mystery indulges with its representation of bucolic communities untainted by modernity, can be read as an indirect expression of anxiety about aspects of modernity like industrialism and

urbanization. Indeed, Alun Howkins points out that one of the most popular songs with the English troops of the Second World War, who were mostly urban dwellers engaging in highly mechanized, archetypally modern warfare, exploits this illusory image of Englishness, perhaps suggesting a displaced hostility towards modernity:

> There'll always be an England
> While there's a country lane,
> Wherever there's a cottage small,
> Beside a field of grain.[48]

Functioning in parallel to the readings of the American hard-boiled and noir modes as popular expressions of modernist angst, discussed in this thesis's first two chapters, Light's argument explores the ways in which the golden age's converse aesthetic strategy similarly articulates anxieties about modern society. She argues that this is done in a veiled and indirect way, using irony, a stylized means of representation, an explicit concern with form, and discreet unassuming language.

While high modernist texts and the hard-boiled and noir variants of the crime genre express their grievances about social alienation, urban life, capitalism, decadence, and political corruption in ways that are obvious, and indeed sometimes superficial, equivalent anxieties are converted to pleasure with a playful lightness-of-touch in golden-age fiction. The golden age's genteel, seemingly lightweight aesthetics might, on the one hand, obscure any direct and committed engagement with anxieties about modern life. These aspects of style, however, in some sense dramatize the concerns, outlined by Light above, about social exchanges becoming affected and hollow, and about places becoming indistinguishable and inauthentic.

[48] Howkins, 'The Discovery of Rural England', p. 88.

In terms of the difference between noir's popular modernism and the golden age's popular modernism, a productive analogy is the difference between Billy Wilder's gothic Hollywood parable *Sunset Blvd.* (1950) and Gene Kelly and Stanley Donen's highly knowing and playful MGM musical *Singin' in the Rain* (1952). Both films present the Hollywood studio system as cynical, profit-driven, and damaging to its employees. The alienating expressionist style, jet-black comedy, wholly self-interested characters, and acerbic screenplay of *Sunset Blvd.* all contribute to its unambiguous representation of the Hollywood studio system as a cruel and dehumanizing institution. *Singin' in the Rain*, on the other hand, shares many of the same features but its critique of Hollywood and its modernist experimentation are veiled in light-hearted comedy, elaborate musical numbers, and an adherence to familiar generic conventions.[49] In Light's re-appraisal of Christie's work, all the characteristics of the golden age that critics have seen as old-fashioned, irrelevant, inauthentic, and lacking gravitas are re-interpreted as positive artistic decisions:

> Once we consider the whodunit as a form of popular modernism, these apparent failings, the emptying of moral and social effect, the evacuating of notions of 'character', the transparency of the prose ('a surface so wooden and dead') appear in a different light. What has come to seem to us the epitome of the old-fashioned and the genteel, arguably began life as a modernising, de-sacramentalising form, emancipating itself from the literary lumber of the past. In popular fiction as much as in high culture, older models were to be broken up, self-consciously redeployed, parodied, pastiched, pilloried. (*FE*, 66)

[49] See Jane Feuer, '*Singin' in the Rain*: Winking at the Audience', in *Film Analysis: A Norton Reader*, ed. by Jeffrey Geiger and R. L. Rutsky (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2005), pp. 440-454 (p. 445).

Under Light's analysis, the convoluted narratives, the shallow characterization, the colourless prose style, the lack of social realism, the focus on middle and upper classes, the use of insular rural settings, and the manufactured sense of closure at the end of each narrative are all calculated effects of Christie's work. Part of Light's argument centres on the societal upheaval of The Great War and the ways that it affected the representation of violence and heroism in the crime genre. She argues that the much-maligned 'anaemia' of the golden age, observable in 'the "gutting" of characters, their insulation from life and the bloodlessness of crime between the wars', should be understood in the context of the period as 'a revolt against the sanguinary rhetoric of 1914, and the haemorrhaging of national languages of romantic self-esteem' (*FE*, 74-75). Of course, the American hard-boiled and noir modes also problematize the representation of traditional heroics but in the aesthetically opposite direction from the golden age, presenting violent and ambivalent anti-heroes, exemplified by the narcissistic, tyrannical version of Mike Hammer that appears in Robert Aldrich's *Kiss Me Deadly* (1955). Understood in this context, the 'feminization' of the crime genre during the golden age should perhaps be regarded as the greater departure from traditional images of masculine heroism in the genre, such as the archetypal Victorian adventurer hero of Conan Doyle's proto-golden-age Sherlock Holmes stories.

As discussed in this thesis's introduction, critical studies of crime fiction routinely define the hard-boiled and noir forms in binary opposition to golden-age and soft-boiled variants of the genre, which they see as culturally English, though such a clear-cut national distinction is a rather crude generalization of the primary

material. There are various problems with identifying golden-age detective fiction as an exclusively English cultural phenomenon, in opposition to the American forms. This categorization of the two sub-genres as binary opposites according to constructions of national identity is unsustainable for two main reasons. First, it neglects America's crucial role in the creation and development of the golden-age mould, from Edgar Allan Poe's invention of detective fiction in 1841 through the various subsequent American texts that contribute to the sub-genre, often in ways that involve specifically American contexts. Second, as argued above, the hard-boiled tradition and golden-age detective fiction are not necessarily as dissimilar as the widely accepted critical views imply. While the golden age is regarded as quintessentially English, conservative, lightweight, artificial, and beneath critical attention, in opposition to its hard-hitting, rebellious, and morally complex hard-boiled counterpart on the other side of the Atlantic, there are in fact certain connections between the two sub-genres in terms of how they re-negotiate the values and assumptions of their generic predecessors, especially with regard to this thesis's recurring themes of community, heroism, and modernity. It is partly because of this parallel between the American hard-boiled tradition and the English golden age, in the sense that each articulates its own populist expression of modernist anxiety, that transatlantic contexts still play an important role in a discussion of Scottish crime fiction's evocation of the culturally English golden age and soft-boiled variants of the genre. Additionally, although golden-age detective fiction's association with English cultural identity during the interwar period is an unshakable feature of critical histories of crime fiction, the golden-age formula has distinctively American

origins in nineteenth-century detective stories. Therefore, the twentieth-century American contributions to the development of the sub-genre cannot be dismissed.

The sub-genre has its most obvious origins in Poe's three Dupin stories 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue' (1841), 'The Mystery of Marie Rogêt' (1842), and 'The Purloined Letter' (1844), though, as argued in this thesis's second chapter, these tales of ratiocination also demonstrate a strong gothic quality which is perhaps somewhat at odds with soft-boiled crime fiction. Nevertheless, certain conventions of the golden-age detective narrative are clearly established in Poe's stories, such as the use of an ingenious, aristocratic amateur detective who is able to solve the highly complex mystery ahead of the middling, unimaginative professional investigators, the use of the 'Watson' type of narrator-assistant, the mystery-to-resolution narrative arc, and the archetypal golden-age denouement, as described earlier in this chapter. These conventions appear, for instance, in the Sherlock Holmes series, Christie's Hercule Poirot novels (1920-1975), and, for the most part, in Dorothy L. Sayers's Lord Peter Wimsey novels (1923-1937). Dupin's method of solving the mysteries, largely through passively reading the newspaper reports and contemplating them analytically, also foregrounds the more abstract, clue-puzzle aspects of the golden age and the self-referential dimension of the mode. The discussion of chess and draughts that opens 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue' and the fact that Dupin is pitted against a rival genius in 'The Purloined Letter' similarly correspond with the very golden-age treatment of detection as a gentlemanly pastime.

Undermining the reductive characterization of the golden-age and hard-boiled modes as exclusively English and American cultural forms respectively, there

are several specifically American contexts that underpin Poe's inauguration of analytical detective fiction that should be taken into account. In his biography of Poe, Kenneth Silverman points out two important material changes in American society that seem decisive in the writer's invention of the genre. First, there was a change in the nature of American police-work: 'twelve years before Poe's story, American cities increased the number and pay of policemen and fostered scientific police work'.[50] Second, there were various changes in the way that crime was reported in the American press: 'The new and sensational "penny newspapers" printed records of criminal trials and reported bloody suicides and murders. Writing a story much concerned with newspapers, Poe picked up many hints from such articles' (*EAP*, 171-172). Silverman's final point is especially revealing in the context of golden-age aesthetics, since the use of newspapers in 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue' distances both the detective and the reader from the action, and contributes to the more interactive, brain-teasing qualities of the detective story, rendering it akin to an example of arm-chair detective fiction. Elaborating the second point that Silverman makes, Karen Halttunen discusses the changes in the American public's popular perceptions of crime and investigation:

> In American culture, the dominant narrative expressing and shaping the popular response to the crime of murder underwent a major transformation in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. For a century after their earliest appearance in late seventeenth-century New England, printed responses to the crime tended to take the form of the execution sermon [...] But in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries that sacred narrative was gradually replaced by a variety of secular accounts – criminal

[50] Kenneth Silverman, *Edgar Allan Poe: Mournful and Never-Ending Remembrance* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1992), p. 171. Subsequent references to this text will use this edition with the page numbers indicated in parenthesis.

> biographies and autobiographies, journalistic narratives, and, most important, printed transcripts of murder trials – which turned attention to the crime itself and its unfolding within worldly time. What was the nature of the violence; when and where had the crime taken place; what were the murderer's motives; and just how had he or she been brought to worldly justice?[51]

Although she is not discussing Poe specifically, the developments that Halttunen outlines suggestively take place in the decades leading up to the publication of 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue'. While the execution sermon was more of a cautionary narrative, high-mindedly focussed on 'the spiritual condition of the condemned criminal' (*MMF*, 2), these more practical, scientifically and legally inquisitive accounts of crime turned the American public's attention to the kinds of question about evidence, motive, method, and investigation that dominate the detective narrative. Indeed, the questions that Halttunen lists at the end of the above quotation provide all the conceivable permutations of the different mysteries to be solved in classic detective fiction.

There are other, more esoteric cultural contexts for Poe's invention of detective fiction in America at this time. In his book *American Hieroglyphics* (1980), John T. Irwin argues that Jean-François Champollion's discovery of the Rosetta stone and subsequent deciphering of ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics in the 1820s, which sparked a wave of popular interest in Egyptian antiquity in America during this period, functions as an index for the explorations of sign, symbol, and meaning in the American nineteenth-century literary renaissance. This connection provides another American context for Poe's detective fiction, as Irwin's insightful

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[51] Karen Halttunen, *Murder Most Foul: The Killer and the American Gothic Imagination* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1998), p. 2. Subsequent references to this text will use this edition with the page numbers indicated in parenthesis.

discussion of Dupin illustrates: 'Considering Poe's frequent admiring references to Champollion, it is tempting to speculate that one of the models for the character of Dupin – that intuitive decipherer of clues, with his fondness for enigmas, conundrums, and hieroglyphics – was Champollion'.[52] The rise of American Transcendentalism at this time can likewise be productively read alongside Poe's invention of detective fiction, in the sense of the Transcendentalist understanding of the material world as a series of profoundly interrelated symbols to be read as part of larger narrative. Indeed, according to Alexander Kern, Transcendentalists believe in 'an organic universe in which Nature, suffused by an immanent God, corresponded with spirit in such a way that the connections and indeed the whole could be grasped by contemplation and intuition'.[53] Although Poe was not a Transcendentalist in his worldview, and was even openly critical of the movement, parallels can readily be discerned between the methods of detection employed by Dupin and American Transcendentalism's emphasis on reason and contemplation, along with its interest in deciphering clues and re-constructing narratives based on evidence.

Various other American contributions to the detective genre since Poe similarly share more with the golden age than they do with the hard-boiled tradition, while nevertheless invoking American contexts. Mark Twain's *The Tragedy of Pudd'nhead Wilson* (1894), for instance, is set in Mississippi before the Civil War and, topically, it involves a case of deliberate switched identities between two children, both ostensibly white, but one of whom is a small part black, and therefore

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[52] John T. Irwin, *American Hieroglyphics: The Symbol of the Egyptian Hieroglyphics in the American Renaissance* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1983), p. 44.
[53] Alexander Kern, 'The Rise of Transcendentalism, 1815-1860' in *Transitions in American Literary History*, ed. by Harry Hayden Clark (New York: Octagon, 1975), pp. 247-314 (p. 251).

technically a slave, and the other is a white aristocrat. That the switch is possible illustrates the farcical nature of the distinction, and Twain uses the subsequent narrative to show that it is the children's different upbringings rather than their racial origins that have established their characters. While the novel obviously has a serious satiric purpose, which in one sense aligns it with the hard-boiled mode's more progressive potentials, it nevertheless has much in common with the golden-age narrative and indeed the comedy of manners. The investigative character, an eccentric lawyer named Pudd'nhead Wilson, is an intellectual who dabbles in amateur detection. His much-derided hobby of collecting fingerprints is eventually the key to solving the mystery. Twain's novel might also be considered one of the earliest examples of the 'inverted detective story', a sub-sub-genre of the golden age, in the sense that the reader is aware of the crime and the identity of the perpetrator from the start of the story. The narrative interest arises from the way that the crime is detected and, to borrow Halttunen's terms, how the criminal is brought to worldly justice, as depicted in the trial scene in the last few chapters. Like the golden-age mode, moreover, the tone of *Pudd'nhead Wilson* is subtly comic, often with an inflection of gentility.

Similarly genteel in narration, but with more of a lightly gothic flavour, there is also a significant American precursor to the golden age in the shape of what is often referred to as the 'Had I But Known' school of detective fiction, illustrated by the novels of Carolyn Wells and Mary Roberts Rinehart. The derisive label denotes the typical retrospective narration, usually from the point of view of a middle-aged female narrator, an often clunky device calculated to generate suspense and

emotional engagement by unsubtly hinting at the dangers to come. The 'Had I But Known' label is certainly justifiable with Rinehart's debut novel *The Circular Staircase* (1908): 'If we had only stuck to that decision and gone back before it was too late!'[54] Despite preceding the golden age by over a decade, *The Circular Staircase* uses lots of aspects that would come to be associated with the culturally English variants of the genre, such as the setting in a big old isolated country house, complete with fawning superstitious servants and secret rooms, a mystery that centres around families, and the genteel narrative style of the moneyed amateur detective figure Miss Rachel Innes, who introduces herself as 'a middle-aged spinster' and 'a properly equipped maiden aunt' (*TCS*, 1-2).

As well as such precursors, there are also many twentieth-century American writers who imitate the English style, which had become a globalized phenomenon in the inter-war period, such as Earl Derr Biggers, S. S. Van Dine, Ellery Queen, Rex Stout, C. Daly King, Craig Rice, and Carolyn Keene. These American contributions to the sub-genre are well-documented in Catherine Ross Nickerson's article 'Women Writers Before 1960' (2010) and Stephen Knight's short sub-chapter 'American Gold' (2004).[55] One example of the later American pastiches that is especially pertinent to this chapter is Carolyn Keene's best-selling Nancy Drew mysteries (1930-2003).[56] Although Atkinson's presentation of the fictional Nina Riley series seems intended to conjure up the English soft-boiled style, there is a

[54] Mary Roberts Rinehart, *The Circular Staircase* [1908] (New York: Dover Publications, 1997), p. 1, p. 2.
[55] Catherine Ross Nickerson, 'Woman Writers Before 1960' in *The Cambridge Companion to American Crime Fiction*, ed. by Catherine Ross Nickerson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 29-41. Stephen Knight, *Crime Fiction 1800-2000: Detection, Death, Diversity* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p. 93-102.
[56] Nancy Drew was created by Edward Stratemeyer but 'Carolyn Keene' was the pseudonym for the series' variety of ghost-writers over the decades.

clear parallel between Martin's series, with its 'gung-ho' Scottish teenage girl detective, and Keene's Nancy Drew series. Indeed, Knight's description of the latter is uncannily similar to the passages from *One Good Turn* that open this chapter: 'Nancy remains 18, virginal, enthusiastic, super-intelligent, multi-skilled and consistently defending wealthy whites, with their faithful servants, mostly black, against the threat of foreigners, tramps and the unwashed in general'.[57] It is suggestive that one of the most conspicuous sources for the fictional Nina Riley series, ostensibly a send-up of the English soft-boiled mode, is an American series.

The level of detail and the mordant, irony-laden tone in the passages from *One Good Turn* would certainly seem to indicate that the fictional Nina Riley series is a direct parody or a thinly-veiled version of some real-life Scottish detective series. However, there is no obvious target of the passages' satiric impulse, in the sense that no one single text or series matches up with all the details that Atkinson highlights. Intriguingly, Chris Brookmyre's very different kind of crime novel *Where the Bodies are Buried* (2011), published five years after *One Good Turn*, features a lively and determined young actress called Jasmine Sharp who takes over her uncle Jim's private investigation business. Although there is not an obvious target text, it is nevertheless productive to read Martin's series as a satiric conflation of various different texts or kinds of text. There is clearly a veiled critical point being made via *One Good Turn*'s self-reflexive presentation of a fictional detective series, and the passages provide the kind of condescending critical reading that is habitually aimed at real-life examples of popular Scottish fiction and the golden-age murder mystery.

[57] Knight, *Crime Fiction 1800-2000*, p. 97.

M. C. Beaton

The most appropriate Scottish point of comparison to the Nina Riley series is the Hamish Macbeth murder mysteries, written by the highly prolific M. C. Beaton (b. 1936), and adapted for Sunday evening television by BBC Scotland (1995-1997) to much popular acclaim. Set in the fictional quaint highland village of Lochdubh, Beaton's charmingly old-fashioned detective novels revolve around the improbably frequent murder investigations undertaken by local village bobby Hamish Macbeth. The novels tend to follow the conventions of the golden-age formula reasonably faithfully, mostly using a closed community of eccentric upper-class characters and adhering to the formally satisfying golden-age narrative arc, which Horsley refers to as 'the death-detection-explanation model' (*TCCF*, 38). The fictional setting of Lochdubh is also very much consistent with Tom Nairn's characterization of the Kailyard:

> Kailyardism was the definition of Scotland as consisting wholly of small towns full of small-town 'characters' given to bucolic intrigue and wise sayings [...] Their housekeepers always have a shrewd insight into human nature. Offspring who leave for the big city frequently come to grief, and are glad to get home again (peching and hoasting to hide their feelings). In their different ways, village cretins and ne'er-do-wells reinforce the essentially healthy *Weltanschauung* of the place.[58]

Beaton's series and the BBC adaptation are arguably more critically interesting and non-conformist than this summary suggests, however, and the less normative aspects will be examined in more detail shortly. Although the Hamish Macbeth series has a

[58] Tom Nairn, *The Break-Up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-Nationalism*, (Altona: Common Ground Publishing Pty Ltd, 2003), pp. 145-146.

contemporary setting, unlike the immediate post-war setting of Martin's novels, it still undeniably constitutes 'an affectionate nod in the direction of an earlier time and an earlier form' in terms of the nostalgic conservative values it largely espouses and its unashamed observance of dated literary conventions. The differences between using an amateur teenage girl sleuth and an older professional male detective as an investigative protagonist, however, are multiple and generically significant, and there are several playful, unconventional aspects of Beaton's novels that further preclude aligning them indiscriminately with the Nina Riley series.

Murder, of a personal and rationally motivated nature, is the crime of choice in Beaton's twenty-eight Hamish Macbeth novels. The titles of the novels reflect this tendency, the majority of them following the same pattern, such as *Death of a Gossip* (1985), *Death of a Cad* (1987), *Death of a Perfect Wife* (1989), *Death of a Snob* (1992), *Death of a Nag* (1995), *Death of a Macho Man* (1996), and *Death of a Poison Pen* (2004). The quaint exception to this persistent titular set-up is *A Highland Christmas* (1999), in which Hamish Macbeth is underwhelmingly called upon to investigate stolen Christmas tree lights and a missing cat, since a death would presumably be too much at odds with this otherwise largely syrupy festive tale. As is suggested by the examples given above, the murder victims in the series tend to be hateful or unsympathetic characters of one kind or another. This type of victim is a convention of the golden-age murder mystery, since establishing them as an unpleasant or sinister character limits the reader's identification with them. Doing so makes it less of a narrative trauma for the reader when the character is killed, but more importantly it also gives several of the other characters a clear motive for the

murder, which contributes to the clue-puzzle dimension of the text. To offer a rare example of inter-war golden-age detective fiction with a Scottish setting, the victim of Dorothy L. Sayers's *Five Red Herrings* (1931) is a hot-tempered drunken trouble-maker named Campbell, who has made six clear enemies in his village all with different reasons and lacking a watertight alibi. Only one is the murderer, however, and the other five turn out to be the eponymous red herrings. The novel thus provides an example of what might termed the 'Who shot J. R.?' approach to the mystery narrative.[59] *Five Red Herrings*'s perfunctory use of a Scottish setting and ensemble of one-dimensional Scottish characters is noteworthy if only in the sense that it does not really contribute to the otherwise quintessentially golden-age narrative in any discernible way. As Gill Plain points out, '*Five Red Herrings* (1931) is located entirely in Galloway, but few would argue that the inclusion of some scenery and a few cod accents makes Lord Peter Wimsey or his investigation any less English'.[60] In spite of the culturally English style and superficial Scottishness, Sayers's novel does constitute something of a precursor for the Hamish Macbeth novels.

Although it does not make its list of suspects quite as transparent as the title of *Five Red Herrings* does, the first of the Beaton's series, *Death of a Gossip*, rather remarkably opens with a 'Cast of Characters (in order of appearance)' before the narrative commences.[61] Prefacing the mystery with such a list is very much in keeping with the golden age. It limits the number of suspects from the outset,

[59] *Dallas*, dir. by Irving J. Moore (Lorimer Productions, 1978-1991).
[60] Gill Plain, 'Theme Issue: Scottish Crime Fiction' [Introduction], *Clues: A Journal of Detection*, 26.1 (2008), 5-9 (p. 5).
[61] M. C. Beaton, *Death of a Gossip* [1985] (London: Constable & Robinson Ltd., 2008), p. 7. Subsequent references to this text will use this edition with the page numbers indicated in parenthesis.

contributes to the self-consciously theatrical qualities, and eliminates any sense of naturalism or random chance. To reiterate Malmgren's point, the world of the golden-age mystery is 'relatively free of contingency'. A tale of 'bucolic intrigue', *Death of a Gossip* features a similar story to *Five Red Herrings*, revolving around fishing in a remote rural Scottish village, again using a closed community of suspects who all bear a grudge against the victim. In some sense, the Scottishness of the Hamish Macbeth novels is also similarly inauthentic, corresponding partly with the culturally English golden age and partly with recent manifestations of the Kailyard tradition, such as *Dr. Finlay's Casebook* (1962-1971) or *Monarch of the Glen* (2000-2005). *Death of a Gossip* follows a group of tourists, mostly English and mostly upper class, thrown together on a Highland fishing holiday in Lochdubh run by local instructors John and Heather Cartwright, a husband and wife team who have emigrated from England themselves. One member of the fishing party presents herself as society widow Lady Jane Winters but is in fact a suggestively-surnamed vicious gossip columnist called Jane Maxwell from the London *Evening Star*. She begins to cause trouble for the rest of the amateur anglers when she takes every opportunity to insult and humiliate them, and, more significantly, drops hints that she knows about dark or embarrassing secrets from their past. Consequently, in a rather clunky rendition of golden-age convention, nearly every member of the fishing party wishes death upon her or swears to kill her at some stage during the first three chapters (*DOAG*, 38, 40, 48-49, 59-60, 65).

When Lady Jane's corpse eventually turns up in comically improbable golden-age fashion, accidentally caught on John's fishing hook during a casting

demonstration, there is predictably a small group of nine viable suspects. These suspects, moreover, all have the motive and the means, as it is also discovered that she has been strangled by a nylon leader, which the class has been taught to tie on the first day of the course. While awaiting the arrival of three savvy urban detectives from the neighbouring fictional town of Strathbane, the local village constable Hamish Macbeth begins the murder investigation, collecting together the suspects and interviewing them. When Detective Chief Inspector Blair and his two side-kicks from Strathbane arrive, Hamish is told 'Just you attend to your usual rounds and leave the detective work to us. We're all experienced men' (*DOAG*, 105). In a slight twist on both the ingenious amateur detectives of the golden-age surpassing the professionals and the rogue cops of the hard-boiled tradition continuing their investigations after being dismissed, he inevitably ends up solving the murder through persistent and open-minded detective work. Finally, he lets Inspector Blair take the credit for the case on the grounds that he does not want promoted out of his easy work or his beloved village: 'I have no mind to leave Lochdubh. But if you were to put something in your report about my hard-working, if unintelligent, help, that would be just fine' (*DOAG*, 180). This idea of an unexpectedly brilliant detective avoiding promotion because he is idle and unassuming adds a certain light comic irony that is tonally consistent with the golden age, and his physical laziness certainly has a precedent in Rex Stout's obese arm-chair detective Nero Wolfe.

In most respects, then, *Death of a Gossip* is a throwback to the English golden age and, as such, it is difficult to reconcile it with the deeply contrasting Scottish crime fiction explored in the first three chapters of this thesis. For this

reason, and on the basis of the nationality of the majority of the main characters, the question of whether or not Scottishness is a meaningful category for *Death of a Gossip* is certainly more debatable than the Scottish crime texts covered so far. There are a few references to the Scottish landscape, which are made generically relevant in the way they glibly invoke the gothic contexts discussed in this thesis's second chapter: 'It was not like being in the British Isles at all [...] The village was so tiny and the tracts of heather-covered moorland and weird twisted mountains so savage and primitive and vast' (*DOAG*, 24). Such images are later elaborated: 'How abhorrent the idea of killing things seemed in London, thought Alice, and how natural it seemed in this savage landscape' (*DOAG*, 82-83). These examples, of course, provide a metropolitan outsider's perspective on the remote Scottish scenery, echoing the kind of clash between urban and rural worldviews frequently found in golden-age texts and in Scottish examples from James Hogg's *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824) to *The Wicker Man*. Such fleeting references to the gothic qualities of non-specific Scottish scenery are not enough to authenticate the novel's Scottishness.

The ways in which *Death of a Gossip* most conspicuously departs from the trends of recent Scottish crime fiction are in its use of a rural, almost pre-modern setting, its focus on economically comfortable characters, its artificiality, and its adherence to golden-age convention. However, as the more nuanced appreciations of the golden-age detective story cited above demonstrate, even within the inauthentic, there is still the possibility of authenticity. This paradox is the key to understanding how the Hamish Macbeth novels can still be distinctively Scottish in the sense of

participating in the same contexts as the more representative Scottish crime texts discussed in the first three chapters. Some of the central aspects of Light's argument about Christie can be productively transposed to a discussion of Beaton's series as understood within a post-industrial Scottish context. Light's argument examines the revealing reluctance in Christie's work to address the worst crises of modernity facing the United Kingdom during the interwar period, which would include the aftermath of The Great War, the Irish War of Independence, the General Strike of 1926, the Depression, the rise of fascism in Europe, and the constant threat of international conflict. The equivalent American crises of modernity are tackled directly in hard-boiled crime fiction of the period, but the golden age conspicuously prevaricates on such issues. Light reads these apparent evasions in the golden age, however, as oblique engagements with modernity, astutely pointing out that post-war readers were not likely 'to confuse literary fantasy with the real thing' (*FE*, 75). Light's argument that such conspicuous omissions contribute meaningfully to a reading of Christie's fiction invokes Macherey's model of Marxist literary theory, but golden-age detective fiction is a special case since the elisions are so obvious in a genre that regularly deals with violence and angst. As argued in this thesis's first two chapters, Scottish hard-boiled and noir fiction since the 1970s, in a similar way to its American prototypes, directly engages with the crises of modernity facing Scotland at this time, such as the recession, de-industrialization, the rise of Scottish nationalism, urban deprivation, Thatcherism, chronic unemployment, industrial action, and the erosion of organic working-class communities. To transpose Light's argument about Christie, then, Beaton's Hamish Macbeth series can be understood

as evading these contemporary Scottish issues of modernity, offering instead an anachronistic representation of an organic rural community largely resistant to the changes affecting Scottish society. Of course, this resistance, on the part of both the fictional village and the novel itself, in some sense, provides an indirect expression of anxiety about modernity.

It is important to point out that there are several brief, but decidedly surreal, moments in *Death of a Gossip* when such issues of modernity do rather viciously and unexpectedly impinge upon the novel's otherwise insular, artificial world. At one point, for instance, Hamish's London-based cousin Rory Grant, a reporter for the *Daily Recorder*, tells him: 'I had my bags packed and was going to set out on the road north when the Libyans decided to put a bomb in Selfridges and some Jack the Ripper started cutting up brass nails in Brixton' (*DOAG*, 132). The casual tone with which his cousin mentions terrorism and psycho-sexual crime, 'brass nail' being Cockney rhyming-slang for prostitute ('tail'), as an inconvenience to his travel plans makes this example genuinely quite transgressive, especially within the context of an ostensibly quaint detective story. This instance both acknowledges the nastiness of contemporary Britain and simultaneously underlines the escapist appeal of Lochdubh as a fictive world. Similar examples of unexpected modernity in soft-boiled Scottish crime fiction include DJ Smith and her trained sniffer-cat being incongruously called upon to investigate heroine-smuggling and money-laundering in The Mulgray Twins' *No Suspicious Circumstances*, and the retrospective re-insertion of the 1926 General Strike into the golden-age tradition in Catriona MacPherson's *The Proper Treatment of Blood Stains* (2009).

Death of a Gossip's most sustained conscious engagement with the main themes of the Scottish hard-boiled and noir texts of the same period comes, however, when Hamish reflects on the nature of the crimes with which he usually has to deal, and dreads the changes planned just outside his community:

> Crime in Hamish's parish usually ran to things like bigamy or the occasional drunk on a Saturday night. Most village wrangles were settled out of court, so to speak, by the diplomatic Hamish. He was not plagued with the savage violence of poaching gangs, although he felt sure that would come. A new housing estate was being built outside the village; one of those mad schemes where the worst of the welfare cases were wrenched out of the cosy clamour of the city slums and transported to the awesome bleakness of the Highlands. To Hamish, these housing estates were the breeding grounds of poaching gangs who dynamited the salmon to the surface and fought each other with razors and sharpened bicycle chains. (*DOAG*, 82-83)

The first two sentences from this passage are very much in keeping with the rest of the novel's representation of Lochdubh, representing the kind of low-key, largely harmless criminal activity that might be expected in Hamish's village. The notion of the proposed housing estate and the way that it is explored in the latter part of the quotation, however, is rather unexpected and somewhat problematic. The phrase 'cosy clamour of the city slums', the ideologically loaded term 'breeding grounds', and the clichéd images of urban gangs suggest that the novel, like the stereotyped image of the golden age, is either socially naive, in that it is unable to see the connection between economic inequality and its attendant vandalism and violence, or indifferent to the problems of the poor. The kind of rural myth-making and resistance to modernity expressed in passages like this one from *Death of a Gossip* engage with a much wider issue in twentieth-century Scottish fiction and

international representations of Scotland. This construction of Scottishness could usefully be termed the 'Brigadoon' approach, in reference to the 1954 MGM musical in which a pair of American tourists stumble across Brigadoon, an ancient Scottish village which rises out of the mist for one day every hundred years untainted by change or the outside world.[62] This kind of rural resistance to modernity is expressed in much Kailyard fiction and critiqued in anti-Kailyard fiction such as George Douglas Brown's *The House with the Green Shutters* (1901) and Lewis Grassic Gibbon's *A Scots Quair* (1932-1934). It is also articulated in texts as diverse as J. M. Barrie's *Farewell Miss Julie Logan* (1932), Alexander Mackendrick's *Whisky Galore!*, George Mackay Brown's *Greenvoe* (1972), and Bill Forsyth's *Local Hero* (1983).

Like these examples, the brief passages where *Death of a Gossip* explicitly alludes to the crises of modernity facing Scotland during this period seem absurd in the context of the novel and in the world of golden-age detective fiction. Bearing in mind Light's analysis of the work of Christie, however, it can be argued that even the more conventional aspects of *Death of a Gossip* refract certain modernist anxieties about the disintegration of community that Light attributes to the world of Christie: 'a society of strangers whose social exchanges have become theatrical and dissevered from a sense of place'. In a post-industrial Scottish context, such concerns about the erosion of community are prominently expressed in McIlvanney's powerful novels of the 1980s and the formally challenging work of James Kelman. Of course, in *Death of a Gossip* these anxieties are not agonized over, but filtered through familiar genre conventions and transformed into

[62] *Brigadoon*, dir. by Vincent Minnelli (MGM, 1954).

unchallenging amusement. The friendly Highland community of Lochdubh, for instance, is presented as deceptive and Anglophobic, but this depiction does not seem to be consciously put forward as social commentary because the tone is one of drollery: 'The tourists were mostly English and were treated by the locals with outward Highland courtesy and inner Highland hate' (*DOAG*, 15). The reason that Lady Jane sparks the murderous ire of all other anglers by dropping hints about their pasts, moreover, is not only to fulfil the clue-puzzle requirement that there should be a small group of suspects with clear motives, but it also rather gloomily confirms that 'everyone has a skeleton in the closet' (*DOAG*, 104). Some of the characters' 'skeletons' are minor, such as Alice Wilson breaking a window as a teenager or Daphne Gore's mental health problems. Some transgressions correspond to the golden age's inquisition of respectable society, such as aristocrat Jeremy Blythe's fathering of a secret love-child with a lowly barmaid when he was at Oxford. However, there is also the American character Marvin Roy's more serious, and indeed more modern, past indiscretions of running sweatshops and exploiting illegal immigrants. Although it is a convention of the sub-genre, then, this notion that 'everyone has a skeleton in the closet' subtly undermines W. H. Auden's reading of the golden age as a redemptive and optimistic mode when it comes to representing community. Light's revisionist notion of Christie's archetypal intimate village as 'a community whose members ought to know each other but don't' (*FE*, 92) is also unexpectedly suggested in *A Highland Christmas*, when Hamish visits the neighbouring village of Cnothan:

> Hamish did not bother asking who the incomers were. She probably meant people who had settled in Cnothan during the last twenty years. Once a newcomer, always a newcomer. That's the way things were in Cnothan. And you never really got to know anyone in Cnothan.[63]

Instead of the close-knit traditional rural community associated with both the golden age and the Kailyard, village life is presented as insular, mean-spirited, and narrow-minded. It is here more in line with Barbie in George Douglas Brown's *The House with the Green Shutters* (1901) than with Thrums in J. M. Barrie's *A Window in Thrums* (1998). The final sentence of the above passage, moreover, has surprising echoes of Tom Reagan's existentially lonely, cynical refrain from the Coen brothers' postmodern noir *Miller's Crossing* (1990): 'Nobody knows anybody. Not that well'.[64]

Similarly, the golden age may be focussed on the middle and upper classes, which, according to Chandler, cannot signal anything except for the sub-genre's insulation from 'what goes on in the world', but the representation of these classes in the golden age is not unambiguously celebratory. Rather, as with the comedy of manners, class refinements are often presented as hollow, affected, and sometimes even sinister. Indeed, Light calls Christie's work 'one huge advertisement for the murderousness of English social life' (*FE*, 87), perhaps indicating that the English class system may be based on the empty signifiers of breeding and gentility but the inequality it perpetuates is nevertheless a diffuse but very real form of violence. This notion is introduced with comic irony in *Death of a Gossip* when Alice, a middle-class secretary from London who harbours aspirations for upwards social mobility,

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[63] M. C. Beaton, *A Highland Christmas* [1999] (London: Constable & Robinson Ltd., 2009), p. 16. Subsequent references to this text will use this edition with the page numbers indicated in parenthesis.
[64] *Miller's Crossing*, dir. by Joel Coen (Twentieth Century Fox, 1990).

considers her motives for signing up to the trip: 'Everyone who was anyone, Alice gathered, went to Scotland in August to kill things' (*DOAG*, 23). Class is also depicted as a set of theatrical gestures and affectations: 'The major put his hand to his ear in a sort of list-who-approacheth way. Most of his gestures were stagey' (*DOAG*, 98). This foregrounding of the characters' theatricality suggests that class is something that can be faked. This fakery is sometimes not entirely successful, such as when Alice is described as being 'like a London typist trying ineffectually to look like a member of the county' (*DOAG*, 39). However, the murderer of the novel, Amy Roth, is a former sex-worker from Brooklyn who easily convinces the rest of the fishing party, including her husband, that she is '*old* money' and 'a Blanchard of the Augusta, Georgia, Blanchards' (*DOAG*, 67-68). Her subterfuge is only made possible through her invocation of a convincingly artificial American South mediated by *Gone With the Wind* (Victor Fleming et al., 1939), complete with gamblers, barns, mansions, verandahs, smells of beeswax and lavender, and phrases like 'I decleah' (*DOAG*, 97). In the world of the novel, then, it is the difference between Alice and Amy's acting abilities that determines their difference in social status. Alice is not any lowlier in family or profession than Amy, but she is treated as socially inferior and thus takes on that identity, simply because Amy is a better actor. Of course, while this notion of gentility as a pose, rather than an authentic aspect of identity inherited through breeding, which echoes the theme of *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, is potentially progressive, the fact that the murderer is revealed to be a former member of an exploited underclass somewhat undermines this reading. Indeed, this denouement might be considered a self-conscious instance of a

'fictive resolution of ideological conflicts' that Macherey discusses. Contributing to this reading, just prior to Hamish's revelation, the novel's generic artificiality is playfully foregrounded by Inspector Anderson's jeer: 'You've been reading too many detective stories, Hamish. Great detective gathers suspects in the library and unmasks killer' (*DOAG*, 172). It can also be argued that this choice of murderer is simply one possible variation of the golden-age story. Indeed, the subsequent Hamish Macbeth novel *Death of a Cad* takes Henry Withering, a supercilious upper-class playwright, as its murderer. What is more important is the fact that all the characters, regardless of their social status, are potential murderers throughout the narrative until the final chapter, as Hamish's reply to Alice illustrates:

> 'Do I look like a murderer?' asked Alice intently.
> 'I think a murderer could look like anyone,' said the policeman placidly. (*DOAG*, 112)

Hamish's view adheres to the golden-age convention of not ruling any suspect out, regardless of class or appearance, in order to maintain the maximum interest of the clue-puzzle.

It also feeds, however, into the modernist anxiety that any sense of community with shared values and assumptions is no more, replaced by what Light calls 'a society of strangers'. While this image is conspicuous in the disjointed urban settings found in high modernist texts and film noir, it is nevertheless present in a more comic and unobtrusive form in much golden-age fiction. It is to be remembered that the sleepy village of Lochdubh, for instance, actually emerges as something of a hot-bed of violence, murder, deception, and bitter internecine

resentments over the course of the twenty-eight Hamish Macbeth novels. This against-the-grain reading of the placid golden-age village is so well-established in the interwar murder mystery that Christie's Miss Marple story 'The Thumb Mark of St. Peter' (1932) self-reflexively ironizes it:

> 'God forbid that I should ever regard village life as peaceful and uneventful' said Raymond with fervour. 'Not after the horrible revelations we have heard from you! The cosmopolitan world seems a mild and peaceful place compared with St. Mary Mead'. (*TTP*, 87)

Of course, even as the story acknowledges its fictive world as an absurdly violent and murderous location, it does so with a comic tone. Hard-boiled and noir fiction, as well as post-industrial Scottish fiction, on the other hand, advertise their dystopian elements conspicuously. Noir especially plays up its barbarous urban settings, presenting murders as typical of their environment rather maintaining the golden-age illusion that is an aberration.

Given the dominant images of masculinity in recent Scottish crime fiction and indeed in Scottish culture generally during the 1980s and 1990s, Hamish Macbeth is a surprisingly comic and discreet detective protagonist. Writers like William McIlvanney, Irvine Welsh, and Iain Banks complicate traditional images of heroic Scottish masculinity during this period, presenting violent, disillusioned, hyper-masculine, and deeply ambivalent male characters. Indeed, the racist misogynistic antihero of Irvine Welsh's *Filth* (1998), Detective Sergeant Bruce Robertson, gets his name from a deliberate inversion of the mediaeval Scottish folk hero Robert the Bruce (1274-1379). Beaton's detective protagonist, however,

overturns traditional images of manly heroism in the tonally opposite direction from the hard-boiled examples that dominate recent Scottish crime fiction. Indeed, Hamish is introduced to the series in a belittling manner by John Cartwright as 'our scrounging village constable', followed in quick succession by a description of him that firmly establishes that he does not fulfil the expectations of the archetypal post-industrial Scottish male:

> He was very tall and thin and gawky. His uniform hung on his lanky frame, showing an expanse of bony wrist where the sleeves did not reach far enough and a length of woolly Argyll sock above large regulation boots. He removed his peaked hat and scratched his fiery red hair. Then he reached inside his tunic and thoughtfully scratched one armpit. (*DOAG*, 13-14)

The character is not a traditionally masculine or heroic figure. The series instead emphasizes his ungainliness and his quiet affable nature, which makes him stand in stark contrast to figures like McIlvanney's Laidlaw and Ian Rankin's Rebus. Indeed, in both *Death of a Gossip* and *A Highland Christmas*, Hamish is depicted taking children briefly under his wing, including a generically surreal occasion in the latter novel when he takes time out of his busy schedule to pay a friendly house-call to the strict Calvinist parents of nine-year-old Morag Anderson, when he learns that she will not receive any Christmas presents (*AHC*, 61). Such scenes demonstrate that he is disproportionately sentimental and sensitive, characteristics that are traditionally gendered female and which are therefore largely alien to the hard-boiled antiheroes and the post-industrial Scottish males of the fiction discussed in the first chapter of this thesis.

This alternative representation of masculinity, coupled with the particular kind of wry humour observable in the final sentence quoted above, however, bears a certain similarity to the celebrated 1980s films of Scottish director Bill Forsyth such as *That Sinking Feeling* (1980), *Gregory's Girl* (1981), *Local Hero* (1983), and *Comfort and Joy* (1984). Forsyth's films provide a productive point of comparison in the context of this chapter because they are, on one level, popular good-natured comedies exhibiting a droll lightness-of-touch and idiosyncratic style but they also intervene meaningfully in constructions of Scottish identity at this time. Forsyth Hardy suggests that Bill Forsyth's films are characterized by such qualities as 'a quirky sense of humour, a preference for amiable eccentricity, [and] a reluctance to identify anything remotely evil in his characters and situations'.[65] As Duncan Petrie argues, however, 'such a benign reading of the comedic mode serves to obscure or misrecognise the more serious elements lurking just below the surface of Forsyth's world'.[66] Destabilizing the reductive models of Scottish masculinity at this time, the male characters in *Gregory's Girl* and *Comfort and Joy* are likeable but insecure fantasists, in comparison to the more confident, decisive and self-aware female characters in the same films. The distinctive images of Scottish identity found in *Local Hero* also feed into aspects of Beaton's detective. The shrewd local residents of the fictional village of Ferness represent a particular construction of rural Scottish identity, also observable in *Whisky Galore!* and *The Wicker Man*, in which they subversively conform to the stereotypes by pretending to be naive and old-fashioned in front of visitors and incomers. This construction is evident in *Death of a Gossip*

[65] Forsyth Hardy, *Scotland in Film* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1990), p. 177.
[66] Duncan Petrie, *Screening Scotland* (London: British Film Institute, 2000), pp. 153-154.

when Hamish deliberately plays up his 'Highland teuchter' image as a means of getting what he wants, including scrounging a free cup of coffee (*DOAG*, 18) and avoiding promotion (*DOAG*, 180). There are also plenty of examples of Highland eccentricity in the novel that echo the quirky dialogue of *Local Hero*, such as one morally dubious moment when Hamish impishly pinches Lady Jane's bottom because she refuses to let him past and then comically denies it: 'Och, no [...] It will be them Hielan midges. Teeth on them like the pterodactyls' (*DOAG*, 19). Beaton's Hamish Macbeth novels, then, refract of the same anxieties about community, masculinity and modernity as the Scottish hard-boiled and noir texts of the same period, but do so using an opposing aesthetic strategy which elides the cynicism, violence, politicization, and experimentation with form that are discussed in this thesis's first three chapters. Despite maintaining an emphasis on comedy and adhering to genre conventions, they nevertheless engage with the same aspects of modernity as the more dominant Scottish crime fiction, obliquely presenting the erosion of traditional community values and circumventing the potentially limiting images of Scottish masculinity.

Kate Atkinson

As is evident from their presentation of the fictional Nina Riley series, the self-consciousness and formal experimentation endemic to golden-age crime fiction are far more pronounced in the crime fiction of Kate Atkinson (b. 1951). It does not matter for the purposes of this thesis that Atkinson claims her work is not crime fiction, and indeed hates the label, dismissing popular crime fiction as plot-driven

and lacking in 'rounded and interesting' characters.[67] The generic categorization of a text is not something that the writer gets to decide, and her comments on the genre suggest that she does not read much contemporary crime fiction. Reading her novels alongside other examples of crime fiction, in any case, allows for a revealing analysis, especially in terms of the relationship between genre and nation. As pointed out earlier, moreover, the English golden-age mode is not the only sub-generic affiliation possible with the Jackson Brodie series. In fact, the novels actively dissociate themselves from the clichés of the traditional murder mystery, as is reflected in the presentation of both the Nina Riley series in *One Good Turn* and the fictional hackneyed television crime series *Collier* that appears in the latest Jackson Brodie novel *Started Early, Took My Dog* (2010). This distancing is also evident in various passages where real-life examples of the sub-genre are mentioned, such as when the character Martin Canning thinks about what his own personal hell would involve: 'the smell of a beef stew cooking in the unventilated kitchen. Tobacco fumes, weak tea, the jaw-clenching sweetness of a fondant fancy. A rerun of *Midsomer Murders*' (*OGT*, 80). All the features mentioned are corrupt versions of old-fashioned, quintessentially English pleasures, contributing to a nightmarish configuration of cosiness. Atkinson's own series of crime novels, of course, surpasses the literary, social and generic limitations of Martin's presumably humdrum Nina Riley stories and indeed *Midsomer Murders*. The Jackson Brodie novels are a fitting example for the final chapter of this thesis because as well as deploying aspects of the traditional mystery narrative with an ironic distance and

[67] 'Interview: Kate Atkinson, author', *Scotsman*, 4 August 2010 <http://www.scotsman.com/news/interview_kate_atkinson_author_1_821075> [accessed 22 September 2012].

featuring bourgeois eccentrics, otherwise largely neglected in contemporary mainstream Scottish fiction, they revisit many of the key themes and concerns already covered in previous chapters of this thesis.

Her detective protagonist Jackson Brodie, for instance, is a psychologically damaged, ex-army, ex-police, Thatcher-hating, strong silent type of private investigator who can be productively grouped alongside McIlvanney's Laidlaw and Rankin's Rebus. Jackson corresponds with the same forms of responsible working-class masculinity represented by these characters. The shepherd imagery used in the third novel *When Will There Be Good News?* (2008) succinctly demonstrates his participation in such constructions, though there is arguably less ambivalence and more of a positive, pastoral dimension than is evident with Laidlaw or Rebus: 'Jackson was a shepherd, he couldn't rest until the flock was accounted for, all gathered safely in. It was his calling and curse. Protect and serve'.[68] To resume the themes of this thesis's third chapter, however, such passages avoid potential accusations of formulism or adulation because the rhetoric of classical heroism is self-consciously excessive. Indeed, *One Good Turn* explicitly subverts this shepherd imagery when Martin reflects that Jackson is 'alert like an intelligent sheepdog' (*OGT*, 442). Jackson's first ever appearance in *Case Histories* (2004) similarly complicates any simplistic identification of him as a traditional hard-boiled hero, when he is introduced listening to 'the reassuring voice of Jenni Murray on

[68] Kate Atkinson, *When Will There Be Good News?* [2008] (London: Transworld Publishers, 2009), p. 82. Subsequent references to this text will use this edition with the page numbers indicated in parenthesis.

Woman's Hour'.[69] Jackson's musical tastes likewise distance him from the more familiar post-industrial Scottish detectives. In contrast to Rebus's middle-aged love of manly and outmoded rock music, Jackson continually seeks solace in female country singers such as Allison Moorer, Emmylou Harris, and Gillian Welch, who themselves provide more nuanced appropriations of a traditionally masculine mode that is bound up with heroism.

Measuring up to social constructions of working-class masculinity nevertheless remains important to Jackson, as is clear from his anxieties when he inherits enough money from an elderly client at the end of the first novel to retire and move to France: 'Real men had to earn a hard crust. They had to labour at the coalface, both real and metaphorical. They didn't spend their days filling up their iPods with sad country songs and feeding apples to French donkeys' (*OGT*, 64). Such passages are, of course, very much in line with the crises of working-class masculinity explored in this thesis's first chapter. The depiction of Martin from *One Good Turn* engages with questions of masculinity in a way that is much more directly relevant to the contexts of this chapter, not related to images of working-class masculinity or the Scottish hard man, but pertaining to comic anxieties about masculinity from a more genteel, self-conscious perspective. It is revealed, for instance, that he purchased a kilt for the black-tie dinners and celebrity launches in his imagined 'glamorous life' as a writer, but 'had never had the nerve to wear it in public […] Occasionally he tried it on and wore it around the house but it was an odd, closeted act, as if he were a secretive transvestite rather than a swaggering Scot'

[69] Kate Atkinson, *Case Histories* [2004] (London: Black Swan, 2005), p. 69. Subsequent references to this text will use this edition with the page numbers indicated in parenthesis.

(*OGT*, 166). Like Beaton's idle, ungainly detective and the male characters in the films of Bill Forsyth, then, this example articulates an alternative variant of contemporary Scottish masculinity, distanced from the orthodoxies of Scottish fiction's proletarian and hard-man traditions. This dynamic might be productively compared to Light's comments on masculinity in golden-age detective fiction: 'The post-war world, however, had made the notion of the conquering detective unpalatable to some, and it needed to give way to a more modest, sometimes agonised sense of English manliness' (*FE*, 72).

There are some very gothic aspects of the series too, revisiting the themes of the second chapter. *Case Histories*, which was highly praised by veteran horror writer Stephen King, is especially gothic in its use of dark repressed family secrets in the Olivia Land case, and its representation of bodily horror, as observable in the scene depicting the murder of Laura Wyre. These features are not antithetical to the traditional murder mystery, however. Being mostly domestic narratives, often set entirely in a single country house, golden-age texts naturally often revolve around families and the motives regularly involve disputes over inheritance, sibling rivalries, and broken marriages. Kate Summerscale's recent novel *The Suspicions of Mr Whicher* (2008), which is partly an historical study of a real-life case and partly an English country-house detective novel, brings out this familial dimension of traditional detective fiction especially well. What is more, the chapter title for the Olivia Land case in *Case Histories*, 'Family Plot', immediately creates an association with the golden age, with its hint of gothic melodrama and dark humour in the pun on 'plot'. The goriness of the Laura Wyre case does not necessarily

conflict with conceptions of traditional English detective fiction either since, as Plain points out, 'While the majority [of Christie's corpses] may rest in tidy repose, sanitised parcels for the detective to unwrap, the novels are also characterised by bizarre eruptions of truly violent death: by fire, by acid, by convulsive poisons and multiple stabbings'.[70] The macabre touches throughout the Jackson Brodie series, however, also sometimes elaborate the kind of conflations of gothic and modernity that characterize noir. In *One Good Turn*, for instance, there is a scene in which Gloria, a character from one of the novel's many intertwined sub-plots, recalls her brother Jonathan's horrific death in an industrial accident:

> Gloria had a sudden image of her brother's mutilated body when it had been shown to his family in the hospital mortuary [...] The week before her brother died he had taken Gloria inside the mill. He was proud of where he was working, doing a 'man's job'. It wasn't dark and satanic, as she had imagined from singing 'Jerusalem' in school assemblies, rather it was full of light and as big as a cathedral, a hymn to industry [...] The only other time Gloria had been inside a real cathedral of industry was long ago on a school visit to Rowntree's factory in York, when her class had marvelled at every step of the way [...] At the end of the tour they had been given bags of mis-shapes of all kinds and Gloria had returned home triumphantly bearing dozens of two-fingered Kit Kats that had, like Jonathan, been mangled by the machinery. (*OGT*, 262-263)

The stomach-churning simile in the final sentence is shocking because it radically re-writes Gloria's otherwise nostalgic memory by insensitively comparing her brother to a Kit Kat mis-shape and thereby glibly transmogrifying a human-being into the worthless waste-product of an industrial process. Such passages are relevant to the themes explored in this thesis's second chapter, echoing the gothic approaches to modernity found in *Complicity* (1993) and *The Cutting Room* (2002), and

[70] Plain, *Twentieth-Century Crime Fiction*, p. 33.

providing an expression of what James Naremore refers to as noir's 'savage critique of modernity' and its 'theme of industrialized dehumanization'.[71] The passage also complicates the kind of English rural myth-making discussed earlier in this chapter, corroborating William Blake's romantic rejection of 'dark satanic mills', even as Gloria consciously undermines it.

Carnivalesque violence, of the kind seen in the work of Christopher Brookmyre and Allan Guthrie, is also unexpectedly present in Atkinson's series, best illustrated by the scene in *One Good Turn* in which Jackson defends himself against a Honda-driving thug by biting his nose: 'Not the most disgusting thing he'd ever done, but close. Honda Man screamed – an unearthly storybook-giant kind of sound' (*OGT*, 196). The themes of parody, pastiche, irony, and experimentation with form, which formed the basis of this thesis's third chapter, are also foregrounded once again in the Jackson Brodie novels. They emerge not only in their presentation of the fictional serials mentioned above, but also in their mannered style, self-reflexive aspects, and their frequent depiction of characters who fantasize about alternative lifestyles which seem to be largely inspired by fiction. However, as the discussion earlier in this chapter indicates, such parodic tropes are not entirely alien to golden-age mystery fiction and it is therefore worth discussing them more extensively within this chapter.

As with Beaton's Hamish Macbeth novels, the absolute Scottishness of the Jackson Brodie novels is in question right from the start of the series. Although the author's nationality is not the defining factor, it is worth mentioning that Atkinson is

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[71] James Naremore, *More Than Night: Film Noir in its Contexts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), p. 93, p. 88.

from Yorkshire but has spent much of her adult life living in Scotland. The first and last novels of the series *Case Histories* and *Started Early, Took My Dog* are both set in England while the second and third novels *One Good Turn* and *When Will There Be Good News?* are set mainly in Scotland. The BBC television adaptations of the first three novels, all shown under the title *Case Histories* (2011), are notably set entirely in Edinburgh, presumably to lend the series a clearer regional identity and to capitalize on the success of much recent Scottish crime fiction. Of the adaptations' setting, Atkinson remarks, 'It won't use Edinburgh as a character in the same way as, say, Ian Rankin uses Edinburgh […] but I think it will be real enough – and certainly in the sense of the bourgeois Edinburgh I inhabit'.[72] In any case, the movements over the border between Scotland and England are an important part of the novels. In Atkinson's novels, Jackson is an English character in that he spent his formative years in Yorkshire and much of his adult life in Cambridge, but he is of Scottish lineage, a point that the series emphasizes, attributing his work-ethic and obsessive early-morning running to 'a hefty dose of Scottish Presbyterian genes' (*CH*, 83). *One Good Turn* later uses the same genes to explain his whisky-drinking: 'It must have been in his Scottish blood all this time, calling to him' (*OGT*, 351). Perhaps the most remarkable point about Jackson's nationality is that, despite not being Scottish in birth or upbringing, his experience of growing up in a working-class mining town in Yorkshire gives the character more in common with the central detectives of Scottish crime fiction than some more unambiguously Scottish fictional detectives, such as Quintin Jardine's character Bob Skinner (1993-present) or

[72] 'Interview: Kate Atkinson, author', *Scotsman*, 4 August 2010 <http://www.scotsman.com/news/interview_kate_atkinson_author_1_821075> [accessed 22 September 2012].

Alexander McCall Smith's Isabel Dalhousie (2004-present) who are both middle-class Edinburgh investigators. This inconsistency raises the question of whether social class signifies more strongly than nation in the construction of British masculinities, and perhaps whether it is an equally significant factor in determining generic structures.

Jackson's reactions to Edinburgh in *One Good Turn* are particularly consistent with those of the hard-bitten working-class Scottish detectives discussed in this thesis's first chapter. When he walks out onto an Edinburgh street at one point, for instance, he reflects that 'you might have mistaken it for a film set of a Dickens novel [or] for the past itself' (*OGT*, 61). He sees Edinburgh Castle as 'fairy-tale Scottish' (*OGT*, 94), and the Edinburgh tattoo as 'a camp spectacle that had nothing to do with the reality of being in the military' (*OGT*, 93). He envisions Edinburgh itself as 'a city where no one worked, where everyone spent their time *playing*' (*OGT*, 274). His background and views on tourist Edinburgh certainly align Jackson closely with Rebus, who is similarly a cynical incomer to the city, having grown up in the working-class mining town of Cardenden in Fife. In some sense, then, Jackson might be considered a culturally Scottish investigator in terms of the way his characteristics are consistent with those of more definitive Scottish fictional detectives. Crucially, however, his observations of Edinburgh also emphasize those dimensions of the city that make it a particularly resonant location for a golden-age-style crime narrative, despite being a resolutely urban area. The interwar murder mystery arguably takes refuge in the past in its use of rural settings peopled exclusively with the leisured classes, by indulging nostalgic fantasies of organic

communities untainted by modernity. Following this reasoning, Jackson's observation that Edinburgh, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is akin to a fictional simulation of a Victorian city, which plays up its 'fairy-tale' qualities and makes a 'camp spectacle' of itself, where inhabitants do not work but spend their time '*playing*', demonstrates why Edinburgh is an apt setting for golden-age crime fiction. Indeed, other characters' observations bear out this understanding of the city: 'The very mention of "Edinburgh" […] made Martin feel sick with nostalgia for a place he hardly knew' (*OGT*, 33). *One Good Turn* represents these aspects of its setting with far more overt ironic distance than the interwar murder mystery, however. Cambridge performs a similar function as the setting for *Case Histories*, moreover, being a place where 'Jackson had never felt at home' (*CH*, 72) but where his ex-wife Josie fantasizes about living in a new housing estate with a 'purpose-built Disney like "community", a cricket pitch, a "traditional" village green and a Roman-themed play area' (*CH*, 73-74). The novels' literal movements across the border between Scotland and England, then, play out at generic and cultural levels too, with the series providing a hybrid between culturally English and culturally Scottish crime fiction.

One Good Turn is a particularly revealing example to examine in more detail within the contexts explored throughout this chapter. Much like the work of Muriel Spark, the novel takes place in a conspicuously ordered fictive world, with certain themes and motifs resonating through the narrative in a carefully regulated, poetic way. Although it consistently uses an omniscient third-person narrator, each chapter is focalized from a single character's perspective, alternating mainly between four

principal characters: Jackson Brodie, a crime-writer called Martin Canning, a bourgeois housewife with a dying husband called Gloria Hatter, and police investigator Detective Sergeant Louise Monroe. One of the key motifs running through the novel is that of Russian dolls. In one flashback sequence, Martin visits St. Petersburg on a package holiday, 'a safe way to travel (the coward's way)' (*OGT*, 124), and sees sets of Russian dolls, or *matryoshka*, for sale:

> But mostly there were dolls, thousands of dolls, legion upon legion of matryoshka, not just the ones you could see but also the ones you couldn't – dolls within dolls, endlessly replicating and diminishing, like an infinite series of mirrors. Martin imagined writing a story, a Borges-like construction where each story contained the kernel of the next and so on. Not Nina Riley obviously – linear narratives were as much as she could cope with – but rather something with intellectual cachet (something good). (*OGT*, 242-243)

Martin's imagined narrative, of course, describes the structure of *One Good Turn*. This kind of *mise-en-abyme* structure has already been conflated with crime fiction in a contemporary American context in Paul Auster's *New York Trilogy* (1985-1986). There are also various Russian female characters involved in various intertwined plots of *One Good Turn*, insensitively continuing the Russian dolls motif. Gloria's husband has a heart attack while he is with a Russian sex-worker called Tatiana, who later befriends Gloria. Jackson discovers the dead body of a Russian housemaid on the beach at Crammond, which Louise then investigates. He also visits a circus at one point and notes that 'the clowns acknowledged their national origins in an act based on Russian dolls' (*OGT*, 376). Martin's dark secret is that he accidentally killed a Russian sex-worker called Irina in St. Petersburg. In chapter thirty, the central chapter of novel's fifty nine and notably the turning point

at which the mysteries built up over the first half of the novel begin resolving themselves, Jackson drags Louise to the office of an agency called 'Favours' to show her important evidence, only to find that the office location has been completely cleared out. All he finds there is the smallest Russian doll of a set. This seemingly insignificant discovery of the central doll in the central chapter can be read as a metafictional joke at the expense of the reader: at the centre of all the layers of mystery is an empty space. Like the golden-age examples of self-reflexivity discussed earlier in this chapter, this scene acknowledges the novel's fundamental concern with form.

While the narrative takes place over four consecutive days that are clearly signposted in the novel, with Tuesday covering chapters one to fifteen and Wednesday covering chapter sixteen to thirty-five for instance, the chapters themselves are arranged in innovative non-linear ways and often involve lengthy flash-back sequences. Consecutive chapters often take place at the same time as each other. This kind of arrangement is a convention of modernist fiction referred to as simultaneity, best demonstrated by the 'Wandering Rocks' episode of James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922). Unlike the classical narrative structures of conventional golden-age detective fiction, the chapters of *One Good Turn* are not arranged to facilitate effortless comprehension and passive consumption, but in order to make aspects of each vignette resonate against one another, creating a variety of effects and meanings. It also defamiliarizes certain aspects of the overarching narrative such as the relationships between the characters and events. This specific style of non-linear story-telling is a stylistic trope of Spark, as demonstrated earlier with the striking

prolepsis from *The Driver's Seat* but it also underpins *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* adding a variety of effects such as black humour and poignancy when the schoolgirls' futures are unceremoniously revealed during scenes principally depicting their childhoods: '"Sandy won't speak to me," said Mary who later, in that hotel fire, ran hither and thither till she died' (*PMJB*, 28). Elsbeth Barker's *O Caledonia* (1991) similarly exploited a distorted chronology. The prologue opens with the main character Janet 'found, oddly attired in her mother's black lace evening dress, twisted and slumped in bloody, murderous death', before shifting back to narrate her birth in the first main chapter.[73] Such non-linearity also, of course, disrupts the conventions of classical narrative by drawing attention to the mechanics of story-telling.

The first five chapters of *One Good Turn*, for example, all describe the same event, a road-rage incident beside the queue for a Fringe Festival lunch-time show, but from five different characters' points of view. The first chapter is focalized by a minor character calling himself 'Paul Bradley' who is attacked by a baseball-bat-wielding thug after an inconsequential collision between their cars. A mysterious stranger steps out of the crowd and intervenes by throwing 'something square and black' at the thug, saving Paul's life (*OGT*, 21). This action, as it is described in the first chapter, suggests that the stranger is a confident heroic figure, creating an expectation that it might be Jackson Brodie. The subsequent chapter, however, is focalized by the mysterious stranger himself, Martin Canning, an insecure and timorous figure who was acting completely out of character when he frantically threw what is now revealed to be his laptop bag: 'Martin had never done anything

[73] Elspeth Barker, *O Caledonia* [1991] (London: Penguin, 1992), p. 1.

like that in his life before. He didn't even kill flies [...] if he'd thought about it he might not have done it' (*OGT*, 22-23). The second chapter also features a sequence in which Martin, like many characters throughout Atkinson's work, retreats into a fantasy world in his imagination, indulging images of conservative Englishness of the kind discussed earlier in this chapter:

> Did other people spend their time daydreaming about a better version of the everyday? [...] No one mentioned the pleasure of picturing yourself sitting in a deckchair on a lawn, beneath a cloudless midsummer sky, contemplating the spread of a proper, old-fashioned afternoon tea, prepared by a cosy woman with a mature bosom and spotless apron who said things like 'Come on now, eat up, ducks,' because this was how cosy women with mature bosoms spoke in Martin's imagination, an odd kind of sub-Dickensian discourse.
>
> The world inside his head was so much better than the world outside his head. Scones, home-made blackcurrant jam, clotted cream. Overhead, swallows sliced through the blue, blue sky, swooping and diving like Battle of Britain pilots. The distant *thock* of leather on willow. The scent of hot, strong tea and new-mown grass. Surely these things were infinitely preferable to a terrifyingly angry man with a baseball bat? (*OGT*, 27-28)

There is a clear link between the 'jolly murder mysteries' that Martin writes and his nostalgia for a conservative Englishness that he has never experienced. Martin's fantasy world consists as in much in the affected language of which it is composed, as it does in the experiences that he conjures up. The repetition of the phrase 'cosy woman with a mature bosom', for instance, suggests that it is a stock phrase to Martin, inspired by fiction and representing a self-consciously artificial idea of the past. Indeed, the passage explicitly refers to his fantasy landscape as a 'sub-Dickensian' discourse. This dynamic whereby characters daydream better versions of the everyday, inspired by fiction and apparently largely motivated by certain

appealing turns of phrase, is also observable in the work of Muriel Spark and Elspeth Barker. There is a comic example in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, for example, when the schoolgirl Sandy composes a formal invitation to Alan Breck, the hero of Robert Louis Stevenson's *Kidnapped* (1886), to come to dinner (*PMJB*, 37). The third chapter of *One Good Turn* introduces Gloria, who is standing at the back of the queue and witnesses the incident from a distance. This chapter is linked not only through Gloria being a witness. Martin's allusion to graceful Battle of Britain pilots and the appealing 'monochrome deprivation' of the immediate post-war period, cited earlier, corresponds with Gloria's approval of the British habit of queuing: 'It seemed a shame she had been born just too late for the Second World War, she possessed exactly the kind of long-suffering spirit that wartime relied on' (*OGT*, 40).

The fourth chapter starts before the road-rage incident, though the reader is not made aware of this time-distortion at this point, with Jackson inside a Fringe venue watching a rehearsal of his girlfriend Julia's play, and it ends with him walking out onto the street in time to witness the incident: 'At the sight of the baseball bat Jackson was suddenly all instinct. He starting weaving his way through the crowd quickly, on the balls of his feet all ready for whatever' (*OGT*, 65). This reaction is the mirror opposite to Martin's interior monologue: 'this is horrible, really horrible, please make the bad man go away' (*OGT*, 23). Jackson's seemingly insignificant observation that 'within minutes a police car was on the scene' (*OGT*, 65) is indirectly explained in the following chapter, which likewise starts before the road-rage incident. Focalized by a schoolboy named Archie, who turns out to be

Louise Monroe's son, the fifth chapter starts off with Archie and his friend Hamish executing an elaborate shoplifting ruse around the corner from the Fringe venue. The boys are caught in the act by the shop assistant, who presumably alerts the police, who are therefore quick on the scene in the previous chapter. The boys then scarper down the street and around the corner just in time to witness the violence (*OGT*, 70). There are more complex, larger-scale examples of this kind of non-classical story-telling, which require the reader to re-process the events that have already been related in light of new information, embedded throughout *One Good Turn*. While this kind of non-linear storytelling is common in film noir, it would intuitively seem antithetical to golden-age crime fiction. However, the chronologically overlapping chapters of *One Good Turn*, often arranged to create the illusion of coincidence by masking the causal connections between the characters and events, arguably create the same effect as the more conventional dual-time-structure of the classic detective story. As Tzvetan Todorov suggests in 'The Typology of Detective Fiction' (1971), the traditional detective story 'contains not one but two stories: the story of the crime and the story of the investigation […] one is absent but real [the story of the crime], the other present but insignificant [the story of the investigation]'.[74] The arrangement of the chapters in *One Good Turn* replicates this structure, making the reader interact with the text by initially obscuring the relationships between the characters and events, and encouraging the reader to re-assemble the apparently coincidental events into a more cohesive, cause-and-effect narrative of the golden-age kind.

[74] Tzvetan Todorov, 'The Typology of Detective Fiction' [1971], in *Modern Criticism and Theory*, ed. by David Lodge (New York: Longman Inc, 1995), pp. 158-166 (pp. 159-161).

Recent Scottish crime fiction's forays into the culturally English golden-age and soft-boiled variants of the genre are neither as negligible, nor as much of a departure from the more central Scottish crime fiction discussed in the first three chapters, as it might intuitively appear. The myth of golden-age detective fiction, that it is cosy, bourgeois, uniquely English, artless, formulaic drivel, obscures the variety of remarkable ways that specific golden-age texts, conventions, and implied values demonstrate meaningful relationships with the societies in which they were produced. Although largely a naive and un-ironic appropriation of the soft-boiled murder mystery format, M. C. Beaton's hyper-cosy Hamish Macbeth series can nevertheless be read within the same contexts of modernity that inform the hard-boiled and noir texts that Scotland has been producing since the 1970s. The decision to set a soft-boiled detective series in a self-consciously artificial, rural society mostly untainted by modernity, at a time when other Scottish crime fiction was addressing anxieties about mass unemployment, gang culture, sectarian violence, Scottish attitudes towards the police, homophobia, the corruption of working-class solidarity, psycho-sexual violence, and urban alienation, seems a profoundly significant one. Reading the Hamish Macbeth novels against-the-grain, their escapist appeal resides in their retreat from contemporary Scottish problems, but this retreat is so conspicuous that they obliquely express the same anxieties about modernity, in a way that has many precedents in popular twentieth-century representations of Scotland. What is more, a sensitive reading of Beaton's novels foregrounds subtle fissures and comic inversions in their ambivalent representations of class, community and heroism which are consistent with more central Scottish crime

fiction. Kate Atkinson's much more knowing and ironic appropriations of golden-age crime fiction in her Jackson Brodie novels, on the other hand, constitute a successful hybrid between culturally English mystery fiction and the culturally Scottish crime fiction of the first three chapters. Like the Hamish Macbeth novels, the series interrupts the proletarian and masculine emphases of much contemporary Scottish fiction. Its self-reflexive concern with form, its well-executed depictions of gentility, and its representation of characters' fantasy landscapes all serve both to comment on the structures and values of traditional detective fiction and to align the series with the work of Muriel Spark.

Conclusion

It isn't in the mirror, it isn't on the page,
It's a red-hearted vibration,
Pushing through the walls of dark imagination,
Finding no equation,
There's a Red Road rage,
But it's not road rage,
It's asylum seekers engulfed by a grudge.
Scottish friction, Scottish fiction.

It isn't in the castle, it isn't in the mist,
It's a calling of the waters,
As they break to show,
The new black death with reactors a-glow,
Do you think your security will keep you in purity?
You will not shake us off,
Above or below.
Scottish friction, Scottish fiction.

- Edwin Morgan, 'Scottish Fiction' (2002).[1]

In his poem 'Scottish Fiction' (2002), the first official Scots Makar Edwin Morgan (1920-2010) negotiates the concerns of contemporary Scottish fiction. In his rejection of 'the mirror' and 'the page' in the opening line, he proposes that Scottish fiction should not be limited to self-obsessed navel-gazing nor confined to existing national literary traditions. Dismissing 'the castle' and 'the mist' in the opening line of the second stanza, Morgan suggests that Scottish fiction can still be Scottish without archaic or superficial markers of literary 'Scottishness'. In this regard, Morgan's poem follows Jorge Luis Borges's eloquent discussion of the relationship between imagined communities and the literature they produce:

[1] Edwin Morgan, 'Scottish Fiction', in Idlewild, *The Remote Part* (London: EMI, 2002).

> A few days ago, I discovered a curious confirmation of the way in which what is truly native can and often does dispense with local color [...] in the Arab book *par excellence*, the Koran, there are no camels; I believe that if there were any doubt to the authenticity of the Koran, this lack of camels would suffice to prove that it is Arab. It was written by Mohammed, and Mohammed, as an Arab, had no reason to know that camels were particularly Arab; they were, for him, a part of reality, and he had no reason to single them out, while the first thing a forger, a tourist, or an Arab nationalist would do is bring on the camels, whole caravans of camels on every page; but Mohammed, as an Arab, was unconcerned; he knew he could be Arab without camels. I believe that we Argentines can be like Mohammed; we can believe in the possibility of being Argentine without abounding in local colour.[2]

Both Borges and Morgan express cynicism about self-conscious attempts to produce national literature, arguing that national self-reflection, the turn to national traditions, and the repetition of national signifiers can actually serve to undermine a text's national authenticity.

Morgan's poem applies this idea to the specificities of contemporary Scottish fiction. He calls for Scottish writers to look beyond the walls of their 'dark imagination', perhaps punning here in the way that Carla Sassi does when she describes Scotland as an 'imagi-*nation*'.[3] He then picks out a motley crew of subjects as being meaningful themes for contemporary Scottish fiction. His examples are striking because they are neither peculiarly Scottish, nor immediately suggestive of Scottishness. Phenomena such as disaffected housing estates, hostility towards asylum seekers, the dangers of nuclear power, and even road rage are concerns throughout the world. They are, in some sense, representative of the particular globalized phase of late modernity that this thesis has addressed. What Morgan is

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[2] Jorge Luis Borges, 'The Argentine Writer and Tradition' [1951], in Jorge Luis Borges, *The Total Library: Non-Fiction 1922-1986* (London: Penguin, 2001), pp. 420-427 (pp. 423-424).
[3] Carla Sassi, *Why Scottish Literature Matters* (Edinburgh: The Saltire Society, 2005), p. 183.

proposing, in effect, is that Scottish fiction can still be confidently Scottish when it deals with issues that are not unique to Scotland. In fact, Morgan argues, Scottish fiction needs to address contemporary, international concerns if it is to avoid being stuck in the past or wallowing in self-obsession.

This thesis has argued that the globalized, popular genre of crime fiction offers a particularly resonant mode for Scottish writers to work through tensions of this kind, but crucially allow them to do so in a way that does not represent an abandonment or dilution of Scottishness. Indeed, as with Mohammed's lack of camels, contemporary Scottish crime fiction's participation in a largely internationally standardized genre does not undermine its Scottishness, but actually facilitates it. Exploiting the genre's dynamic of 'difference *in* repetition', discussed in the third chapter of this thesis, contemporary Scottish crime texts draw on a range of non-indigenous crime traditions to negotiate both the generic source material and the Scottish contexts to which these models are transposed. Even its deployment of globally ubiquitous generic conventions can contribute meaningfully to the fiction's Scottishness, since the tropes of the crime genre necessarily take on distinctive meanings and emphases when they are transposed to a Scottish context.

This thesis has no illusions that it is the final word on the subject of contemporary Scottish crime fiction. It is a burgeoning field in terms of the quality and quantity of primary material being produced, and in terms of the critical work that this primary material attracts. The multiplicity of the field in both regards was demonstrated by the sheer diversity of papers presented at the Society for Scottish Studies in Europe's 'Crime Scotland' conference in Göttingen in May 2012. The

energy, diversity, and public appetite for contemporary Scottish crime fiction was further confirmed by 'Bloody Scotland', the first annual Scottish crime writing festival, held in Stirling in September 2012. Because of constraints on time and length, then, it is inevitable that relevant critical avenues and significant examples of Scottish crime fiction have not been covered in this thesis. The research for this project has suggested two potentially rich areas for further study in particular. While the first chapter explored the representation of urban working-class masculinity, there have been significant developments in the representation of female investigators and protagonists in recent Scottish crime fiction that need to be addressed. The intelligent and engaging novels of Denise Mina and Karen Campbell, along with the increasingly central role that Siobhan Clarke plays in Rankin's Rebus series, would provide particularly revealing case studies for exploring the representation of femininity in hard-boiled Scottish crime fiction. As with the ambivalent depictions of traditional masculinity found in the Scottish crime texts discussed in the first chapter, analysing the representation of femininity in a similar socio-generic context would further serve to complicate the deeply problematic linkage between man and nation. Another area for future research has been suggested by this thesis's argument that examples of Scottish crime fiction express contemporary Scottish concerns about gender, class, politics, and modernity. Following the example of Erin A. Smith's study *Hard Boiled: Working-Class Readers and Pulp Magazines* (2000), it would be productive to supplement this thesis's textual analysis of the primary material with sociological research into the

readerships of contemporary Scottish crime fiction and the social processes involved in the promotion and consumption of these texts.

Contrary to Ian Rankin's claim that there is 'no tradition of the crime novel in Scotland', this thesis has confidently shown that the past thirty-five years of Scottish crime fiction add up to an impressive tradition. It is a strange and heterogeneous tradition. It is a tradition in which a hard-man detective will serve a rapist a cup of tea. It is a tradition in which the grisly fates of capitalists and warmongers are decided by a pun. It is a tradition in which a turd on a mantelpiece is something to be admired. It is a tradition in which characters daydream about other traditions. It is a strange tradition, admittedly, but it is a tradition nonetheless. It is a mongrel tradition, and proudly so, bolstering itself with outside influences, particularly from America. It is as much a response to these outside influences, however, as it is a product of them. It might engage with international concerns, as Edwin Morgan suggests contemporary Scottish fiction should do, but its engagements are inflected with Scottishness, marked by the influence of more indigenous traditions and a worldview shaped by the specificities of Scotland's changing socio-political circumstances since the late 1970s.

There is a danger that a tradition like Scottish crime fiction might lose contact with its social-historical roots and become a self-sustaining mode of entertainment. Given, however, the similarities between Scotland's circumstances at the start of the period and those of today, the social-historical roots of Scottish crime fiction are now more resonant than ever.

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